United Nations A/57/PV.8

General Assembly

Fifty-seventh session

Official Records

8th plenary meeting
Sunday, 15 September 2002, 10 a.m.
New York

President: Mr. Kavan ..... (Czech Republic)

In the absence of the President, Mr. Hussein (Ethiopia), Vice-President, took the Chair.

The meeting was called to order at 10.05 a.m.

Address by His Excellency Mr. Olusegun Obasanjo, President and Commander-in-Chief of the Armed Forces of the Federal Republic of Nigeria

The Acting President: The Assembly will now hear an address by the President and Commander-in-Chief of the Armed Forces of the Federal Republic of Nigeria.

Mr. Olusegun Obasanjo, President and Commander-in-Chief of the Armed Forces of the Federal Republic of Nigeria, was escorted into the General Assembly Hall.

The Acting President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I have the honour to welcome to the United Nations His Excellency Mr. Olusegun Obasanjo, President and Commander-in-Chief of the Armed Forces of the Federal Republic of Nigeria, and to invite him to address the Assembly.

President Obasanjo: On behalf of the Government and people of Nigeria, I join other delegations in congratulating Mr. Kavan on his election as president of the fifty-seventh session of the United Nations General Assembly. I have no doubt that, under his able leadership, the work of this session will be guided to a successful conclusion. Let me also acknowledge the work done by his predecessor, who guided the affairs of the fifty-sixth session with great skill and commitment.

The tireless efforts of our Secretary-General, Mr. Kofi Annan, on behalf of our Organization must not go unnoticed. He deserves our profuse appreciation.

I welcome the newest member of our organization, Switzerland. I have no doubt that this nation will bring unique perspectives to the work of the United Nations, which will enhance the attainment of its objectives.

It is regrettable that international terrorism continues to pose a threat to international peace and security. There is a need for reviewed and concerted efforts on our part to confront the menace until the threat is halted. The various international instruments aimed at combating terrorism deserve our full support. Nigeria remains deeply committed to the fight against terrorism. We are committed to the early elaboration of a comprehensive convention on international terrorism.

Despite the best intentions and efforts of the international community, a scourge of a different nature continues to threaten many parts of the world. I refer here to the numerous theatres of conflict around the world. People continue to expend valuable energies and resources in fighting each other, often for causes that are unproductive. The international community has a responsibility, not only to design appropriate strategies for a measured and early response to snuff out these conflicts, but also to find ways and means of addressing their root causes, and managing them to a

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peaceful conclusion. Only then will true peace and stability reign in the world.

While it is true that many of these conflicts have their root causes in poverty, ignorance, real and perceived injustice and the absence of basic freedoms, it is equally evident that they are often exacerbated, especially in the case of African conflicts, by the influx of small arms into the continent. Illicit trade in small arms and light weapons has continued unabated, with disastrous consequences for many developing countries. We are deeply concerned that manufacturing countries are not doing enough to limit the proliferation of these weapons through appropriate safeguards. We, therefore, call on the international community to consider elaborating a legally binding international instrument to control the supply of these weapons to non-State actors.

The United Nations peacekeeping role is an invaluable one in the global effort to help contain and resolve conflicts around the world. It deserves to be sustained and strengthened. Nigeria is proud to be an active participant in this peacekeeping and peacemaking effort. We remain committed to this responsibility in the conviction that we are our brother's keeper and in the knowledge that there can be no development without peace and stability.

The situation in the Middle East continues to pose a serious threat to international peace and security. We reaffirm our commitment to the right of the Palestinian people to their own independence, as well as the right of the State of Israel to exist within safe and secure international borders, consistent with Security Council resolutions 242 (1967) and 338 (1973). We therefore welcome the vision and the engagement of the Quartet, as well as other sponsors of the Middle East peace process. I urge the parties in the Middle East conflict to cooperate with the international community and give the ongoing peace process a chance. That becomes imperative because we cannot afford a situation of protracted conflict in the subregion.

Nigeria notes with concern the threat that the situation in Iraq poses to international peace and security. We hold the view that any further escalation of tension would lead to very serious consequences. Nigeria, therefore, urges the parties concerned to exercise caution and restraint and that the matter be resolved in accordance with the provisions of the Charter of the United Nations.

There is no shortage of international good will and commitment to development. Various declarations and programmes eloquently address the need for rapid, durable and sustainable development, as well as the desire for the equitable distribution of the world's wealth. In spite of this good will and good intentions on the part of the international community, more than half of humanity lives in abject poverty and ignorance. For many countries in Africa, hunger and disease remain pervasive and deeply rooted. Human development indices for some of the poorest countries are, indeed, unflattering for a world that is so rich but with resources so unevenly distributed.

It is our conviction that urgent, concrete action is required, if the lofty goals we have set for ourselves in the Millennium Declaration to make the world a better place are to be realized. Many developing countries require assistance from the international community in the form of increased official development assistance and foreign direct investment flows and efforts to alleviate their excruciating debt burden and enable them to develop their human and material resource base.

Africa remains committed to the attainment of the goals of the Millennium Declaration. In that regard, I am pleased to state that Africa is seeking to lift itself by its own bootstraps, through the New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD). As members are aware, NEPAD is designed to address, in a sustained and coordinated way, many of the developmental problems associated with Africa's underdevelopment.

We are encouraged by the support that NEPAD has so far received from the international community. The latest evidence of this support is the outcome of the recent meeting of the Group of 8 in Kananaskis, Canada, towards the implementation of the Action Plan. It is hoped that the United Nations high-level segment on NEPAD would record greater successes in the much expected endorsement of that initiative by the international community.

This and other programmes designed to improve the living conditions of the majority of humanity may not yield the desired results if one of the greatest dangers facing humanity today is not addressed with the commitment and urgency it deserves. I am speaking here of the HIV/AIDS pandemic that continues to bring havoc, misery and hopelessness on humanity, especially in Africa where the pandemic is threatening

to wipe out entire generations. For example, it is estimated that out of the 36 million people living with HIV/AIDS worldwide, 75 per cent of them are in sub-Saharan Africa. The consequent toll on the human and material resources of one of the most impoverished regions of the world cannot be overemphasized. Not only is the productive population of Africa being systematically decimated by HIV/AIDS, but efforts to combat this and other diseases, such as malaria, tuberculosis and other infectious diseases, are also diverting scarce resources away from development programmes and projects. Massive assistance is therefore required from the international community to complement the efforts of individual countries.

Nigeria will spare no effort to combat these scourges. While we are fully aware of the insidious nature of all of these pestilences, the spread of HIV/AIDS constitutes by far our greatest source of concern. For that reason, Nigeria is active in contribution to and management of the Global Fund to fight HIV/AIDS.

We have also established a national agency for the prevention and control of HIV/AIDS to coordinate the Government's multisectoral approach to the prevention, control and management of the pandemic. We pledge to continue to do our best in this human struggle against this powerful, destructive force, especially by generating awareness in the country about its prevention and spread. We continue, however, to count on the international community to find cures for these diseases, as well as to give assistance to many of our countries in these efforts. The leadership of the United Nations is critical to the success of these efforts.

I wish once again to draw the Assembly's attention to the pernicious issue of corruption and its manifestation at the international level. We have always maintained that it takes two to tango and that the instances of corruption in developing countries have often been supported by encouragement, and inducements and the provision of safe havens by the industrialized countries. Thus, we are strongly advocating that efforts to establish a convention against corruption need to be expedited, so that we can have global action against corruption.

There is no doubt that the United Nations has served humanity well. It has come a long way since its humble beginnings in 1945. It remains the only organization to which all nations, in varying degrees and ways, are associated and committed. Humanity is the better for the existence of the United Nations. The Organization provides the basis for our collective security, international cooperation and solidarity, which are essential for human coexistence. We must therefore continue to fine-tune its implementations to make it more responsive to the needs of the times and to prepare it for the challenges of the future, some of which could not have been envisaged by the founding Members.

I am pleased to note that there is general agreement among us on the need to reform the Organization so as to make it more democratic in structure, more efficient in management and more manageable in size. Nigeria is a major proponent of the envisaged reforms, especially those regarding the structure and working methods of the Security Council. Nigeria envisages a new Security Council in which it will play the role destined by its geopolitical circumstances and the challenges of the twenty-first century. In this regard, we are willing to contribute to efforts and stand ready to support others of like mind and circumstances in this endeavour.

The Acting President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the President and Commander-in-Chief of the Armed Forces of the Federal Republic of Nigeria for his statement.

Mr. Olusegun Obasanjo, President and Commander-in-Chief of the Armed Forces of the Federal Republic of Nigeria, was escorted from the General Assembly Hall.

Agenda item 9 (*continued*)

General debate

Address by the Right Honourable Pakalitha Bethuel Mosisili, Prime Minister and Minister for Defence and Public Service of the Kingdom of Lesotho

The Acting President: The Assembly will now hear an address by His Excellency the Right Honourable Pakalitha Bethuel Mosisili, Prime Minister and Minister for Defence and Public Service of the Kingdom of Lesotho.

The Right Honourable Pakalitha Bethuel Mosisili, Prime Minister and Minister for Defence and Public Service of the Kingdom of Lesotho, was escorted to the rostrum.

The Acting President: I have great pleasure in welcoming His Excellency the Right Honourable Pakalitha Bethuel Mosisili, the Prime Minister and Minister for Defence and Public Service of the Kingdom of Lesotho, and invite him to address the General Assembly.

Mr. Mosisili (Lesotho): My delegation associates itself with compliments extended to the President following his election to the presidency of this session, to his predecessor, Mr. Han Seung-soo, and to the Secretary-General of the United Nations, Mr. Kofi Annan.

The admissions of the Democratic Republic of East Timor and of the Swiss Confederation to membership of the Organization are a joyous occasion for my delegation. We welcome and indeed congratulate those two countries and nations as they join our family of nations.

As we meet here today, Lesotho and some other countries of the southern African subregion are in the grip of a most devastating and unprecedented food shortage, as a result of a combination of floods, unseasonable frost and drought, consequent upon climatic changes that have hit the region in the recent past.

On 19 April of this year, when the Government of the Kingdom of Lesotho declared a state of famine, it was evident that over half a million people, out of a total of 2.2 million, faced a severe food crisis. Since then, efforts have been made at the national level to address the problem.

Let me take this opportunity, on behalf of the Government and the people of the Kingdom of Lesotho and, indeed, on my own behalf, to express our gratitude for the rapid response of the United Nations and its specialized agencies and programmes and that of the donor community to the crisis facing my country.

HIV/AIDS, which has emerged as a major health and development threat, continues to be a source of grave concern in my country. Most of those who are infected are between the ages of 15 and 45 and constitute the potential and active workforce in Lesotho.

Of equally great concern is the corrosive effect that HIV/AIDS has on the family structure and on the social fabric of our society. We now have a large number of orphans and child-headed households. Those who are sick not only lack adequate counselling and medicine but also lack care and support.

My delegation therefore makes a special appeal to the international community to provide adequate financial support for the African countries, in order to arrest and, indeed, to redress the spread of HIV/AIDS. In this regard, the efforts of the Secretary-General of the United Nations in establishing the Global Fund to fight AIDS, tuberculosis and malaria are most welcome. Indeed, Africa as a whole needs unconditional support in many other areas, particularly in the sectors of agriculture, health, nutrition, water and sanitation and education. Undoubtedly, there is a strong link between poverty and the scourge of HIV/AIDS.

The Monterrey Conference on Financing for Development, the Doha Ministerial Conference on trade and the World Summit on Sustainable Development provided useful forums for discussing steps that must be taken to remove obstacles to economic growth and sustainable development, particularly in the developing countries. We are hopeful that commitments made by our cooperating partners mark a beginning of the process of helping the least developed countries (LDCs) to translate goals and targets of major global conferences and summits into concrete actions. My delegation reiterates that the marginalization of LDCs can be ended only if they are assisted in integrating profitably into the global economy.

Africa took a very bold and decisive step recently in Durban, South Africa, in launching the African Union. There is no doubt, as many may have observed, that while the road to this Union was strewn with many obstacles, there is now some light at the end of the tunnel. This hope is premised on the principles that have guided us in the last thirty-nine years of the Organization of African Unity (OAU). The Africa of today is committed to the principles of democracy, stability, peace, security, good governance and the rule of law. Above all, modern Africa is committed to good economic management because it is, indeed, the mismanagement of our economies that has often led to conflicts on the continent.

The New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD) is a home-grown African strategy and an African Union programme for Africa's development. It is a commitment by African leaders to eradicate

poverty and to place the continent on a path of lasting growth and development. My delegation, therefore, appeals for more international support for NEPAD. We believe that the role of the entire international community in supporting NEPAD, and the role of the United Nations in the coordination and synchronization of activities related to ensuring its success, would indeed provide a fresh impetus for Africa's development.

The right of a people to self-determination is a human right and a fundamental principle enshrined in the Charter of the United Nations. The peoples of Western Sahara and Palestine, therefore, deserve no less. Hence, my delegation urges that efforts to emancipate these nations be strengthened and speeded up.

Lesotho is gratified that one of the oldest and longest running conflicts in Africa has finally come to an end with the signing of the ceasefire in Luanda, Angola, early this year, by the representatives of the National Union for the Total Independence of Angola (UNITA) and the Government of Angola. However, Lesotho and other Southern African Development Community (SADC) countries, as well as the international community at large, are alarmed by the harsh social and economic conditions that confront internally displaced persons and refugees who return to their homes in Angola.

We appreciate the efforts of the entire United Nations system to address this situation. We are of the view that a lot more still needs to be done for the Angolan people, including the provision of significant additional resources as called for by the United Nations Secretary-General, in order to address the humanitarian needs of the people of Angola.

Despite the temporary disruption of the ceasefire negotiations, my delegation is convinced that the Machakos Protocol signed between the Government of the Sudan and the Sudan People's Liberation Movement and Army, remains a viable framework for the realization of durable peace in the Sudan. We urge the warring parties to return to the negotiation table in earnest and in good faith.

The situation in the Democratic Republic of Congo has also been a source of concern to us all. We wish to congratulate the Governments of the Democratic Republic of Congo, Rwanda and Uganda for the signing of the peace agreements, which should pave the way for the withdrawal of troops from the Democratic Republic of Congo. We believe that this will also ensure that the security concerns of the neighbouring countries are adequately addressed, whilst at the same time creating conditions that are conducive for the Congolese people to live in peace in their own country.

Terrorism has become one of the most pressing concerns of the international community in recent times. The Government of Lesotho has joined other peace-loving members of the international community in waging war against this heinous crime.

The Government of Lesotho is committed to the full implementation of Security Council resolution 1373 (2001), and, despite financial and technical constraints, we will continue to discharge our obligations, as stipulated in that resolution.

The shocking images of atrocities perpetrated in Rwanda and in the former Yugoslavia will forever be embedded in our minds. They have served as a painful reminder to the international community that such crimes should never go unaccounted for and their perpetrators unpunished. In that spirit we hail the landmark agreement reached between the United Nations and the Government of Sierra Leone to establish an independent special court for the prosecution of those responsible for the serious decade-long crimes against humanity committed in the territory of Sierra Leone. We hope that the creation of this special court will contribute greatly to the process of national reconciliation and healing, as well as to the restoration and maintenance of peace in Sierra Leone.

The Government of Lesotho reveres the coming into force of the Statute of the International Criminal Court, a momentous period when the countries of the world affirmed their intolerance of those who commit crimes against humanity with impunity. We therefore invite those States that have not yet done so, to become party to the Statute, so that we may embark on this noble but difficult pursuit in solidarity.

I should not conclude this statement without making reference to the issue of the reform of the Security Council. The process of democratization is, indeed, very difficult, and yet inevitable. It essentially involves a lot of compromise and understanding on the part of those who cherish and uphold the basic tenets of democracy and equality of States. My delegation therefore wishes to reiterate its concern that this organ

of the United Nations, which is charged with the maintenance of international peace and security, has itself not yet moved to be more inclusive and more representative. Here again, efforts need to be redoubled and the pace accelerated.

The Acting President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the Prime Minister and Minister for Defence and Public Service of the Kingdom of Lesotho for the statement he has just made.

Mr. Pakalitha Bethuel Mosisili, Prime Minister and Minister for Defence and Public Service of the Kingdom of Lesotho, was escorted from the rostrum.

The Acting President: I now call on His Excellency Mr. Koffi Panou, the Minister for Foreign Affairs and Cooperation of Togo.

Mr. Panou (Togo) (*spoke in French*): The preservation of international peace and security, the fight against terrorism in all its forms, the eradication of poverty throughout the world, the promotion of sustainable development and the establishment of a more just and more human international order are the challenges that we must strive to meet, primarily through the irreplaceable framework of the United Nations. We are meeting once again to find new perspectives in the light of the evolving international situation in order to provide new impetus to our actions by coming together around common objectives.

Before continuing my statement, allow me, on behalf of the delegation of Togo and on my own behalf, to address our warmest congratulations to Mr. Kavan on his election as President of the General Assembly at its fifty-seventh session. His election to that high post is a tribute not only to him personally, but also to his great and beautiful country. I assure him of the fullest cooperation of my country towards the success of his mission.

I also take this opportunity to convey to his predecessor our full gratitude for the effective way in which he led the work of the previous session.

To Secretary-General Kofi Annan, who works tirelessly to strengthen peace and security throughout the world, we reiterate our high appreciation of his commitment and dedication.

I congratulate Switzerland and Timor-Leste on their admission into the great United Nations family.

Democracy, respect for fundamental freedoms and human rights and good governance are factors in development and peace and values to which Togo has long adhered and to which we are deeply attached. It is in the spirit that we must consider the political reforms that were launched 15 years ago at the initiative of our Head of State. These reforms seek to build a peaceful democracy based on the widest possible national consensus and rooted in the historical and socio-cultural realities of our country.

Today, our efforts have led to the establishment and effective operation of almost all the institutions called for in the Constitution of the Fourth Republic, to the restoration of State authority and security and to the revitalization of the national economy. We have achieved these results despite the difficulties that hindered the process of democratization as a result of a poorly begun transition, and despite all kinds of manoeuvres and obstacles constantly set up by an unhelpful opposition. Priority has been placed above all on the continuation of political reforms to ensure that they are undertaken in a climate of restored calm and ongoing concertation among all the political forces of our nation.

It was in this context that, at the initiative of the Head of State, Mr. Gnassingbé Eyadema, we launched an inter-Togolese dialogue among all the country's principal political actors that led to the signing of a framework agreement in July 1999. The implementation of that agreement allowed the establishment of a dialogue between the Government and the opposition on such essential political questions as the organizational modalities of early legislative elections.

It was the will of the Head of State and of the Government to ensure that these elections, open to all political groups without exception, should take place in a climate of peace and security, with the necessary guarantees of transparency and legality. It is also our aim that, at the completion of this electoral process, a new phase should begin in our country's political life with the revitalization of a National Assembly in which political groups that wish to be represented can be so.

All of these achievements, which strengthen political pluralism in Togo, deserve the support and encouragement of our partners, particularly those in

Europe, with a view to normalizing our relations of cooperation. Unfortunately, that has not been the case. As I stressed a year ago from this very rostrum, the people of Togo do not deserve the treatment they have received. It is now clear that the rash imposition of sanctions as a means of political pressure entails limits beyond which such measures become ineffective and run counter to morality and to the duty of international solidarity.

I wish once again to launch an urgent appeal for the resumption of the cooperation that Togo has a right to expect from the international community as an act of solidarity, support and encouragement for the indisputable efforts that have been made by my Government towards the development of the country and the consolidation of the bases of our democracy in a climate of peace, stability and national harmony.

Mrs. Ferrero-Waldner (Austria), Vice-President, took the Chair.

It is well known that we in Togo have made peace and national security our credo, given that no undertaking for sustainable development can be successfully carried out if the recourse to violence prevails over dialogue, concertation and mutual respect and if the world continues to face such terrorist acts as the tragedy of 11 September 2001. Those terrible events, which are still vivid in our minds, require us, individually and collectively, to respond appropriately to the threats represented by terrorism. Togo, which has been a repeated victim of terrorist aggression, understands the importance of the challenge and spares no effort in assuming its share of the responsibility in this struggle.

We must here welcome the speed with which the United Nations has reacted to this problem and contributed to the emergence of an acute awareness of the phenomenon and the dangers it entails for all mankind. Today, as was the case a year ago, it is imperative that we recognize the urgency and need to pursue this campaign. It is clear that we must seek together the factors that will contribute to maintaining peace in all its dimensions.

Yes, crises and armed conflicts still afflict the world, unfortunately, in Africa and elsewhere. While it may be true that some glimmers of hope have emerged in Africa with the resolution of the conflict between Ethiopia and Eritrea and with respect to the settlement of other crises, the situation remains alarming. It is alarming in the Great Lakes region and the Mano River region, which is again experiencing a genuine security problem, with major humanitarian consequences.

Whether we are talking about the Democratic Republic of the Congo, the Mano river region, the Sudan, Somalia or any other country affected by crises, we reaffirm that only dialogue and negotiation can lead to peace and ensure the lasting settlement of disputes. We therefore urge the parties to such crises and armed conflicts to be more courageous and demonstrate greater political will so as to give peace a chance through negotiating processes already under way and by respecting and effectively implementing the provisions of agreements that have already been signed.

In this respect, we welcome the recent announcement of the withdrawal, beginning next week, of Rwandan troops from the eastern part of the Democratic Republic of the Congo, and we hope that the implementation of this decision will strengthen the process under way.

The situation in the Middle East also remains worrying. We must find a solution to the vicious circle of violence — violence breeding violence. Togo has always stressed that violence can lead only to bitterness and resentment and that it further perpetuates violence. This cannot be said enough: dialogue and negotiation are the only means that should be used to settle disputes. We therefore strongly urge both Palestinians and Israelis to end the vicious circle of violence and immediately take up negotiations with a view to achieving a just, comprehensive and final settlement of the question of Palestine, which is at the heart of the conflict in the Middle East. Of course, such a settlement would require recognition of the legitimate rights of the Palestinian people, including their right to a viable Palestinian State. But it would also entail the recognition of the equally legitimate rights of the Israeli people to live in peace and complete security within internationally recognized borders.

This session began just a few days after the conclusion of the World Summit on Sustainable Development, at which the international community stressed more than ever before the need to protect humankind and the natural world. Now more than ever we must protect humankind in its multifaceted character and the environment in all of its variety.

I am pleased to note, too, that this session of the General Assembly is taking place during a historic time for our continent of Africa. Indeed, two years ago, on 12 July 2000, at Lomé, Togo, African countries laid the groundwork for a new Africa by adopting, before the whole world, the Constitutive Act of the African Union. The African heads of State or Government solemnly launched the new continent-wide organization at Durban in July, thereby translating into reality their determination to shape a new destiny for Africa.

Some might be tempted to say that, despite the establishment of the African Union, nothing decisive will be done and that the continent will still be trying to find itself while stagnating in underdevelopment. It is true that, given the current economic and social situation, such pessimism could be warranted. Indeed, our continent of Africa is still the principal victim of an economic order that is out of balance and unfair — one that all too often deprives it of the fruits of its own labour.

Unstable commodity prices, yearly increases in the price of crucial capital goods, debt, limited access to the markets of industrialized countries for our finished and semi-finished goods and the competition with which our products have to contend as a result of the export subsidy policies of certain rich countries — policies that benefit their own industries — are seriously hampering the development of our countries.

Today more than ever it is vital to ask how Africa can reconcile the repayment of its debt with the implementation of its economic growth and development goals. Turning the current situation around is a task that we must undertake through reflection and action.

The establishment of a new structure — the African Union — marks a decisive turning point in the history of our continent, which, more than ever before, needs the invaluable support of the international community in carrying out its development programmes. We are aware that Africa cannot rise to the challenge of growth and development unless it becomes organized to mobilize and make the best use of its resources using external aid only as a complement to its own efforts. We earnestly hope that the consolidation of various subregional organizations for economic integration, together with the synergistic implementation of the New Partnership for Africa's Development, will provide Africa with the means to achieve its ambitions.

In conclusion, I should like to stress that the new international context and the multidimensional nature of the problems to be faced mean that we must work with greater determination and solidarity within the United Nations in order to push back insecurity, poverty and misery. In this regard, we must consider providing this shared Organization with the wherewithal and the increased resources to enable it to achieve peace and economic and social development for our peoples.

That is the price to be paid for the future of humankind. I earnestly hope that the United Nations will, more than ever before, become the ideal tool to implement our ideals of peace, justice, progress and liberty for the benefit of our peoples.

The Acting President: I now give the floor to His Excellency Shaikh Mohammed Bin Mubarak Al-Khalifa, Minister for Foreign Affairs of Bahrain.

Shaikh Mohammed Bin Mubarak Al-Khalifa (Bahrain) (*spoke in Arabic*): I should like at the outset to sincerely congratulate Mr. Jan Kavan on his election as President of the General Assembly at its fifty-seventh session. I should also like to express my deep appreciation to his predecessor, Mr. Han Seung-soo, Foreign Minister of the Republic of Korea, for his tireless efforts in conducting the proceedings of the fifty-sixth session, as well as of the twenty-seventh special session of the Assembly, on children.

I should also like to express our deep appreciation to Secretary-General Kofi Annan for his continued efforts to enhance the role of the United Nations and to enable it to achieve the noble and lofty objectives for which it was created.

Furthermore, I am pleased to extend my congratulations to the Swiss Confederation on its having joined the Organization. I would like also to congratulate East Timor on attaining its independence. It is also my pleasure to welcome the establishment of the African Union, the successor to the Organization of African Unity.

This session was convened on the first anniversary of 11 September, an event that terrified the international community, shocked the human conscience and unified international efforts to face up

to an enemy that has no religion, ethnicity, race or nationality. That enemy is terrorism.

On this painful anniversary, it is incumbent upon us to again extend our condolences and sympathy to the United States of America and its friendly people, and to the families of the victims everywhere, and to condemn terrorism in all its forms and manifestations. We affirm our support for all international efforts that seek to combat its elements and to uproot it.

In line with the purposes and principles of the United Nations Charter and with international efforts, the Kingdom of Bahrain has sought, since attaining independence, to build a modern State and a civil society in which the human being is the focal point. Such a human being would be prepared and qualified to cope with the political, economic and social requirements of modern life.

Moreover, taking firm and confident steps, the Kingdom of Bahrain affirms its commitment to the development and modernization process taking place under the leadership of His Majesty Shaikh Hamad Bin Isa Al-Khalifa, King of the Kingdom of Bahrain. My country was proclaimed a constitutional monarchy following a plebiscite on our National Action Charter, designed to promote democratic and constitutional life in Bahrain. The municipal elections in May 2002, in which women participated both as voters and as candidates, were a success; preparations are now under way for parliamentary elections, which are to take place in October.

The Government and the people have made a concerted effort to ensure success in the democratic and developmental process, as set out in the Kingdom's Constitution and in its policies and programmes in all fields. In this regard, the Kingdom has acceded to the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women. Civic activities have been enhanced and the number of non-governmental organizations has risen. These have been promoted so that all the people of Bahrain may participate in expanding national efforts to ensure the well-being of the people and respect for human rights in all civil, political, economic, social and cultural areas.

The Kingdom of Bahrain takes pride in these achievements, which have been recognized by the United Nations *Human Development Report* for 2002, which ranked the Kingdom of Bahrain high among all countries of the world and, for the sixth time, first among sisterly Arab States. Furthermore, the *Arab Human Development Report 2002* has also mentioned our achievements, showing once again the success of the Kingdom's democratic and development strategy in all areas.

Moreover, the leadership and the people of the Kingdom of Bahrain are proud that, in a report recently published by the United Nations Industrial Development Organization, Bahrain was ranked 42nd among the 87 countries included in the report, and first in the Arab world.

The Kingdom of Bahrain attaches great importance to the question of regional security, because of the repercussions it has on the security and stability of States and peoples. Accordingly, Bahrain has consistently sought to consolidate neighbourly relations and mutual respect with its neighbouring States. Bahrain looks forward to the peaceful resolution of the question of the three Emirates islands, in accordance with the principles and rules of international law and in a brotherly spirit of understanding, on the basis of recent positive developments in the relations between the States members of the Gulf Cooperation Council and the Islamic Republic of Iran, and in the light of the direct contacts that have taken place recently, in particular those between the United Arab Emirates and Iran.

Furthermore, the Arab Summit, held in Beirut last March, confirmed the necessity and importance of security and stability in the Gulf region and of creating a propitious atmosphere for the restoration of normal relations among the States of the region. It called upon Iraq to complete the implementation of relevant Security Council resolutions on the situation between Iraq and Kuwait, especially those relating to Kuwaiti and third-country prisoners of war; to cooperate with the United Nations with a view to alleviating the suffering of the people of Iraq; and to avoid any confrontation that might threaten the States and peoples of the region or the unity and territorial integrity of Iraq, and that might be used as a pretext for interfering in Iraq's internal affairs.

The Middle East is currently facing great danger as a result of Israel's policy in the occupied Palestinian territories and of its perpetration of the most heinous crimes against the Palestinian people, such as assassinations, blockades and the destruction of the infrastructure and the economy. The events that took

place in the Jenin refugee camp and in the Gaza Strip, along with the daily events that occur in all other Palestinian cities, are clear indications of the Israeli Government's aggression and violation of international law and norms and of its unwillingness to accept peace or comply with the international agreements it has signed.

Furthermore, the Palestinian people are still resisting this ferocious assault with great courage and determination, thus asserting their right to fight the occupation and emphasizing their belief in their just cause, while upholding their legitimate leadership and defending their national rights, as endorsed by the international community, in accordance with Security Council resolutions 242 (1967), 338 (1973), and other relevant resolutions, the latest being Council resolution 1397 (2002). They are also upholding the principle of land for peace and the establishment of an independent Palestinian State on their national land, with Jerusalem as its capital.

On the basis of its principles and in support of justice, Bahrain has always stood by the brotherly people of Palestine. It affirms its full support for the Arab peace initiative adopted at the Arab Summit held at Beirut in March 2002 on the basis of the vision offered by His Royal Highness Prince Abdullah Bin Abdul-Aziz Al-Saud, Crown Prince of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia. That vision provides for an end to the Middle East conflict, the establishment of normal relations with Israel in exchange for its withdrawal from all the occupied Arab territories to the borders of 4 June 1967, including withdrawal from the Syrian Arab Golan Heights and the remaining Lebanese occupied territories, and a just settlement of the question of Palestinian refugees in accordance with General Assembly resolution 194 (III) of 1948.

The oppression to which the Palestinian people are subjected and the ongoing situation that threatens security and peace in the Middle East and the world require immediate intervention by the Security Council and the international community to stop Israeli practices against the Palestinian people and to reactivate the Arab peace initiative at the regional and international levels. That initiative is a viable basis for any move towards the achievement of a just and comprehensive peace in the region.

Bahrain has welcomed the initiative of the United States Secretary of State with respect to convening a peace conference on the Middle East, on the basis of ideas and principles put forward by the Arab Summit in the Arab peace initiative and of the relevant international resolutions. It hopes that a just and comprehensive peace in the Middle East will thus be achieved, leading to stability and security, ending the cycle of conflict and violence, and bringing instead a cycle of fruitful cooperation among the countries of the region.

Bahrain has also reaffirmed this position by welcoming the positive ideas in President Bush's 24 June 2002 statement on the Middle East. Those ideas were reiterated in his statement before the General Assembly last Thursday and related to the settlement of the Middle East conflict within the framework of the resolutions of international legitimacy, and with a view to establishing a Palestinian State living side by side with Israel in peace and security.

The Arab side, through the Arab peace initiative and by accepting the ideas that President Bush has put forward, has clearly demonstrated its interest in security and stability in the region. The Israeli side has yet to detail what plans it has for peace and what position it has taken vis-à-vis the Arab peace initiative and the ideas put forward by President Bush. What is needed now is to translate those ideas and initiatives into plans and practical steps that benefit peace and put an end to the present deteriorating situation.

In the light of Bahrain's religious and cultural traditions, as reflected in our Constitution and national laws and as reaffirmed by our policies that focus, inter alia, on the right to life, security and peace, we would like to reaffirm our strong rejection of all forms and manifestations of terrorism. We would also welcome the convening under United Nations auspices of an international conference on terrorism, with a view to reaching an internationally agreed definition of terrorism that differentiates between unacceptable terrorist acts and legitimate struggle and resistance by people against foreign occupation to achieve national liberation and self-determination, and to defend themselves in accordance with the United Nations Charter, to which we adhere in word and deed.

The Kingdom of Bahrain has followed with great interest the developments in Afghanistan, a country that has lacked stability and has suffered the ravages of war for many years. We welcome the measures taken by the Government of Afghanistan with a view to

promoting security and stability and restoring normal life for its people. We have also cooperated fully with the Committee established pursuant to Security Council resolution 1373 (2001) on financial and logistical measures against terrorist activities, in line with the concept of collective action within the United Nations.

Bahrain has supported all initiatives to establish nuclear-weapon-free zones and has supported other confidence-building measures in regions such as the Middle East, where we have supported the creation of a zone free of all weapons of mass destruction, especially nuclear weapons, in accordance with the relevant General Assembly resolutions. We call upon all our neighbours to support this idea in order to release resources that could be used for the prosperity and development of peoples. We call on the United Nations to exert pressure on Israel to accede to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons and to subject its nuclear facilities to the comprehensive safeguards system of the International Atomic Energy Agency.

Dialogue and tolerance among States and peoples contribute to the promotion of understanding and the maintenance of international peace and security. Based on that conviction, and emphasizing the importance we attach to General Assembly resolution 53/22 of 16 November 1998 concerning the United Nations Year of Dialogue among Civilizations, the Kingdom of Bahrain has hosted a seminar organized in cooperation with the Government of Japan. A number of internationally known intellectuals from the Arab and Islamic worlds and from Japan participated in the seminar, which was convened last March and was entitled "The Dialogue among Civilizations: The Islamic World and Japan". The seminar sought to promote dialogue between Arab-Islamic civilizations and other civilizations so that different cultures may grow closer to one another.

In furtherance of this approach, the Kingdom of Bahrain will also host the tenth session of the Islamic-Christian Dialogue Conference, to be held from 28 to 30 October 2002. The objective is to promote better understanding between world religions and cultures, and to enhance interaction and exchange in order to preserve the progress that has been made and to invigorate an informed outlook for the future, wherein cooperation in the interest of the entire human race, without discrimination, can take place.

In conclusion, I would like to state that, thanks to cooperative efforts, the World Summit on Sustainable Development, recently held in Johannesburg, provided a favourable opportunity for the review and evaluation of achievements made over the past 10 years, the identification of impediments and challenges, the development of strategies and the identification of objectives and priorities for joint action. It is our hope that all States will implement the outcome of the Johannesburg Summit and will address the challenges facing us all, especially the developing States.

In that context, the Kingdom of Bahrain would like once again to affirm the importance of practical and effective implementation of the Millennium Declaration with regard to development and the role of the international community and international organizations in supporting national efforts in that field.

We are confident that the United Nations, with the determination, political will and hard work of its Member States, is capable of efforts that will help us achieve our shared goals of just peace, economic prosperity and social justice throughout the world. It is in our interest to cooperate with one another to make the United Nations the main engine of our activities, in order to achieve a better world: one of peace, security, prosperity and justice for all peoples and all States.

The Acting President: I now give the floor to the Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Syrian Arab Republic, His Excellency Mr. Farouk Al-Shara'.

Mr. Al-Shara' (Syrian Arab Republic) (*spoke in Arabic*): It gives me great pleasure to congratulate Mr. Jan Kavan on his election to the presidency of the General Assembly at its fifty-seventh session. I am confident that the many posts he has occupied will facilitate his task in leading the deliberations of the General Assembly to their desired objectives. I also express our appreciation to his predecessor for the efforts he made to bring the deliberations of the fifty-sixth session to a successful conclusion.

I would be remiss if I failed to express our appreciation to Secretary-General Kofi Annan for his efforts to preserve the principles and purposes of the United Nations Charter. I wish him success as he strives to contribute successfully to the just solution of the problems that the international community faces.

I would also like wholeheartedly to welcome Switzerland as the long-awaited newest Member of the Organization. We look forward to cooperating with it in promoting the principles of the United Nations and safeguarding its Charter.

This session of the General Assembly has been convened one year after the 11 September attacks, which had an impact on the current international situation. In the aftermath of the attacks, many grave issues remained unresolved, awaiting effective solutions, and many questions went unanswered. The state of confusion, incertitude and tension on the international scene results from the feeling of the majority of the world's people that they have lost their orientation. This results from a tendency on the part of some to use practices that can be best characterized as unilateral, expressing an appetite for hegemony and monopoly over the wealth of others.

The Middle East region is a case in point. After decades of struggle waged by the people of the region to liberate themselves from colonialism and foreign domination and to try to eliminate injustices resulting from the redrawing of maps and the enforcement of artificial borders between them, the people of the region are facing a more vicious attack today than they faced during earlier colonial periods.

The Arab countries have condemned the attacks against the United States of America. They have expressed sympathy for the families of the victims. Nonetheless, a year after the event that was officially linked to the Al Qaeda organization and the Taliban movement, the world wonders how those accusations were re-channelled so as to be levelled against the Arab countries to such a degree that some of them are being threatened, while none of them had anything to do with the attacks.

The irony is starker since justification for the accusation is usually linked to the presence of some Al Qaeda elements in those countries or to the fact that such elements are nationals of those countries, while it is public knowledge that elements of the Al Qaeda organization are present in more than 60 countries around the world, including the United States of America, according to official American statements.

Since the end of the Second World War, our region has witnessed a series of wars and destruction as a result of an Israeli approach based on occupation, settlement building and the uprooting of hundreds of thousands of Palestinians from their homeland. The United Nations has made efforts to find a just solution for the Arab-Israeli conflict. To that end, the United Nations has adopted hundreds of resolutions that Israel has refused to implement, in a stark challenge to the will of the international community. Israel continues to occupy the Golan, the West Bank and Gaza and parts of Lebanese territory.

When the Arab countries unanimously launched their peace initiative at the Beirut summit in March 2002, Israel responded by launching a widescale military attack against Palestinian cities, villages and camps in the West Bank. Israel's defiance of international legitimacy assumed proportions that have been condemned by international public opinion, particularly when the Israeli Government refused to receive the fact-finding mission to investigate the details of the massacre at the Jenin refugee camp.

Israel has claimed that the crimes it has carried against the Palestinian people under occupation have been carried out in self-defence and in the war against terrorism. We see how Israel has manipulated the war against the Taliban and Al Qaeda in Afghanistan. In that context, it is important to stress that silence in the face of such manipulation amounts to total disregard for human values, as much as it is disregard for defenceless Palestinian souls.

Without going into details of the Israeli attacks and violations in which American weapons were used, the only way out of the crisis faced by the peoples of the region is by making Israel abide by relevant Security Council resolutions, which thus far are 28 in number. Is it reasonable for the world to request Iraq to implement Security Council resolutions, while some help Israel remain above international law? It is indeed legitimate for us to ask the United States to distance itself from the aggressive Israeli practices and to apply to Israel the American law that prohibits the use of American weapons against a third party. It is indeed odd that the United States considers Israel to be acting in self-defence in occupied territories, which is not in keeping with Security Council resolutions in whose drafting and adoption the United States itself has participated since the founding of the United Nations.

Just and comprehensive peace in our region can be achieved only through the implementation of resolutions of international legitimacy that stress the need for Israel to withdraw from all the Arab territories

occupied since June 1967 and to safeguard the legitimate rights of the Palestinian people, including the right to establish their independent State with Jerusalem as its capital.

Much has been said recently about the danger of the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction and the possibility that international terrorists might acquire such weapons. As is well known, that danger is not limited to one region. Rather, it exists in many regions of the world. It is regrettable that certain parties focus only on some Arab and Muslim countries, and not on others, ignoring in the meantime Israel's nuclear arsenal. All the countries of the region have expressed, year after year, their readiness to make the Middle East region a zone free of all weapons of mass destruction — nuclear, chemical and biological.

Today more than ever before, we call for urgent and serious efforts to make our region free of all weapons of mass destruction, under the supervision of the United Nations. We declare from this rostrum that all the Arab countries are prepared to establish such a zone, provided that Israel will agree to establish such a zone and to submit all its nuclear facilities to the safeguards system of the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA), as have the other Middle East, Arab and Muslim countries of the region.

The majority vote that Syria won upon submitting its candidacy for membership to the Security Council highlights the appreciation of these countries for Syria's constructive role in supporting the United Nations.

Mr. Pfanzelter (Austria), Vice-President, took the Chair.

It is well known that Syria has always been in the forefront of countries whose respect for international legitimacy constitutes a principled position in their foreign policy. We agree with the Secretary-General about the necessity of avoiding unilateral measures and resorting instead to working within the framework of the United Nations, which represents international legitimacy.

In that light, we see no justification for igniting a new war in the Middle East. We strongly believe that striking Iraq, which no longer occupies the land of others, while keeping silent about the Israeli occupation of the Arab territories occupied since 1967, represents blind bias and a distorted vision of the real situation in the Middle East.

The international community is committed to the unity, sovereignty and territorial integrity of Iraq. We cannot recall anyone doubting that commitment. We also stress that it is the right of the Iraqi people alone to decide their future without any interference in their internal affairs. It is the duty of all Members of our Organization to commit themselves to the implementation of United Nations resolutions. In keeping with that commitment, Syria supports the resumption of dialogue between Iraq and the Secretary-General with the objective of reaching a political solution that meets the requirements of the Security Council and that grants Iraq hope of peace, security and the lifting of the sanctions imposed on it, especially as Iraq has officially recognized the State of Kuwait and its international borders.

Syria has expressed its satisfaction at positive developments in the African continent. We are confident that the establishment of the African Union will have a positive impact on the present and future of that continent and on solving the urgent problems it faces. In that regard, we look forward with true hope to the implementation of agreements recently signed by the parties concerned to end the fighting in Angola, Congo and the Great Lakes region.

Syria also expresses its satisfaction at the increasing international support to end the embargo against Cuba.

Syria further welcomes the high-level talks between the Democratic People's Republic of Korea and the Republic of Korea and expresses the hope that this rapprochement between the two Koreas will help achieve the aspirations of the people of the Korean peninsula by peaceful means.

The Syrian Arab Republic hopes that peace and stability will prevail in Afghanistan in the interest of the Afghan people, who have long suffered the scourges of war and internal strife.

Syria supports the efforts of the Government of the Sudan to preserve the unity and territorial integrity of the Sudanese people and calls for a ceasefire in the south of Sudan as a prelude to the resumption of dialogue.

Syria supports the Artah agreement reached by the Somalis and deems it the most viable solution for achieving national reconciliation in Somalia.

The world's peoples are passing through a difficult test at this critical juncture; the choices of even big and influential countries, are getting narrower rather than broader due to the absence of a just world order. It is to be regretted that the voices of those who call for war rise above the voices of those who call for peace and that those who usurp the rights of people and encroach on their dignity are drowning out the voices of those who defend the rights of people regarding their territory and freedom.

But despite this grim picture, right will, in the final analysis, triumph over injustice. That is the correct reading of the history of nations and civilizations; there is no going back. Arab Syria's belief in its rights and the rights of other nations cannot be shaken or undermined by hegemony and the arrogance of power. We are convinced of the possibility of building a world in which all coexist in peace and security, a world free of occupation and hegemony, a world in which all peoples equally share the resources of our globe and the fruits of science and technology in order to achieve prosperity for all.

The Acting President: I now give the floor to His Excellency Mr. Joap de Hoop Scheffer, Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Netherlands.

Mr. De Hoop Scheffer (Netherlands): The smoke at ground zero, only a few blocks away from here, has cleared. But the empty space where the twin towers once stood continues to send shivers throughout the world. The unspeakable events that occurred a year ago have become engraved in our collective memory. What occurred here was an unprecedented and direct attack on universal values: values such as mutual respect, such as tolerance, such as the rule of law — values that form the very basis of the United Nations.

Over the past year, the world community has proven its determination to defy terrorism. Today, the Netherlands not only reiterates its attachment to these values but also underlines a responsibility, both individual and collective, for upholding and protecting them. And that responsibility calls for a real commitment.

Religions, races and traditions make our world colourful and diverse. But underneath our different feathers, we share a common skin: principles we all adhere to — or should adhere to — regardless of our religious beliefs or race. Mutual respect, the rule of law, freedom of speech and religion are among the most important ones.

We cannot, however, confine ourselves to merely restating these principles. Without real commitment they would quickly evaporate and thus become empty words.

It goes without saying that the Netherlands is fully committed: it is a dedicated international partner, both out of choice and out of necessity, in the United Nations, the European Union, NATO and other organizations, or in common endeavours such as the World Summit on Sustainable Development. The Netherlands will continue to dedicate 0.8 per cent of its annual gross domestic product to development cooperation and urges others to do the same.

Behind that commitment is the unshakeable belief that no country can hope to succeed on its own in whatever policy area. In this respect we take to heart the wise words of Secretary-General Kofi Annan: "Even the most powerful countries know that they need to work with others, in multilateral institutions, to achieve their aims" (*A/57/PV.2*). We therefore also welcome the United States decision, announced from this rostrum by President Bush, to return to the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO). The Netherlands not only feels an individual responsibility for the defence of universal values, but a shared responsibility as well. Let me elaborate on this today in relation to four key areas of concern: the development of the African continent, uncontrolled migration, the continuing threat of terrorism and the situation in the Middle East.

Africa continues its struggle towards development and prosperity. It cannot and must not do so all by itself. We all share a responsibility for eradicating poverty and enhancing Africa's global integration.

Too often the African continent is associated only with misery and instability. In reality the number of conflicts in or between African countries has decreased. The creation of the African Union, and the New Partnership for Africa's Development, testify to the continent's own commitment. The Netherlands very much welcomes this acknowledgement by African leaders of their own responsibility for building a

prosperous and peaceful continent. For us, this is essential for adding our own efforts and resources to achieve that objective. It also means that African leaders, like all of us, can be held accountable for their governance and policies, their performance in the field of human rights and their respect for the rule of law.

In partnership with African countries the Netherlands will continue to do its share in providing the necessary resources. For us, development cooperation is not just providing money, but also a policy integrating the promotion of good governance, security and stability. Is the world to assist in alleviating the effects of natural disasters when in fact they are, at least in part, man-made?

Responsibility also extends to the private sector, particularly when it comes to fighting the disease that undermines all efforts at development: HIV/AIDS. However, for the fight against AIDS to be successful, it needs to be fully endorsed by African Governments. That means: acknowledgement of the problem and its causes, an open discussion of possible strategies and addressing its consequences for society.

Africa concerns us all. Its problems affect us all. Poverty, conflict and violations of human rights contribute to an ever-increasing migration. This phenomenon is, however, by no means unique for the African continent. We need to deal with it effectively, regardless of whether we represent countries of origin, countries of transit or those of destination. Migration is robbing countries of origin of a vitally important resource: human capital. For neighbouring countries or countries of transit it can be a source of instability. For countries of destination, it often creates problems of integration.

Here again, common values are at stake. Governments should do everything in their power to avoid people having no other choice than fleeing home. The number one priority is addressing the underlying causes of uncontrolled migration.

In the meantime, we need to support the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), which is stretched to its limits dealing with a problem for which it was not devised. The Netherlands welcomes UNHCR's efforts to establish and implement an integrated policy aimed at the repatriation of refugees, coupled with their re-integration, rehabilitation and reconstruction. Obviously, these efforts have to be dovetailed with those of other United Nations agencies active in those areas.

It is precisely through such an integrated approach that we can hope to achieve results. UNHCR's mix of policy areas obviously has to be complemented by that of security. That is one of the reasons why the Netherlands is involved in peacekeeping or similar operations in Bosnia, the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia (FYROM) and Afghanistan. Security is the quintessential consideration for those who are to return to their homes. Without security, resettlement and recovery remain pious wishes. Money spent on security is money well spent.

In the year following 11 September 2001 the international community has effectively taken its responsibility. Its joint efforts have focussed on bringing about more security and increased stability in Afghanistan. Much has been accomplished: a regime hostile both to the Afghan people and to our commonly shared values has been ousted. Subsequently, our collective efforts have helped establish an elected Government and begin the reconstruction of a disrupted society.

There can be no leniency towards countries that reject universal values, because a country that rejects tolerance, endorses intolerance. A country that does not guarantee the rule of law invites anarchy and injustice. The international community must help countries that are unable to do so themselves. It must try to persuade those that are uncooperative and it must be ready, if necessary, to act against those that are unwilling.

The terrorist attacks have also shown that religion, for some, unfortunately, is a source of inspiration not for good, but for destructive purposes. The hijacking of planes should not result in the hijacking of an entire religion. Proper education, freedom of opinion and speech, secular or representative government can help contain religious extremism. Here again, we have a collective as well as an individual responsibility for upholding and protecting common values.

What we need is a dialogue between countries, civilizations and religions. But we also need action to go after the sources of religious extremism.

That same commitment leaves us no choice but to continue to work towards peace in the Middle East.

The instability there, the lurking dangers of religious extremism and weapons of mass destruction require our joint dedication.

The many different actors in the Middle East share a duty to restrain violence and curtail extremism. Stability in the region is an indivisible interest, not only for the region itself but far beyond. The countries in the region have prime responsibility for ensuring that their citizens can live in freedom and an environment of tolerance and respect. But the international community has a role to play as well. Here in particular, we expect the Security Council to take its responsibilities to end the Iraqi regime's systematic non-compliance with a range of earlier resolutions. The inspectors should be allowed to return, yesterday rather than tomorrow. The credibility of the United Nations system is at stake.

The Israeli-Palestinian conflict cannot be dealt with solely by concentrating on the fight against terrorism. Terrorism must stop, not only because of the human suffering it causes, but also because it is utterly counterproductive. The Palestinian people should ask themselves where this violence has got them. On the other hand, Israel cannot defer indefinitely answering the question as to when and how it is to live side by side with a Palestinian neighbour. Finding a solution again requires true commitment from all parties concerned and a dialogue across regional, religious and other borders. That involves us all.

In conclusion, since we share values, we share responsibility for upholding them. That should determine our commitment to addressing the problems that I mentioned. Our commonly held values should guide our dealings with each other — between individuals as well as between countries. It is only when we acknowledge what we have in common that we can find the strength to overcome our differences. If there is one thing that our presence here, one year after 11 September 2001, makes clear, it is this: our belief in freedom and tolerance is unshakeable, and so is our commitment to uphold them.

The Acting President: I now give the floor to the Minister for Foreign Affairs, Cooperation and Francophonie of Gabon, His Excellency Mr. Jean Ping.

Mr. Ping (Gabon) (*spoke in French*): Gabon is pleased to see Mr. Kavan presiding over the work of the fifty-seventh session of the General Assembly, which is being held at a time when the need to strengthen international cooperation to resolve the world's problems is indeed vital. His election is a recognition by the international community of the role that his country, the Czech Republic, plays in the promotion of freedom and peace.

To his predecessor, Mr. Han Seung-soo, we express our satisfaction at the excellent job he did as President of the General Assembly at the previous session.

To Secretary-General Kofi Annan, we convey our gratitude and support for his forceful work on behalf of international peace and security.

Gabon welcomes the admission of the Swiss Confederation and the imminent accession of the Democratic Republic of Timor-Leste to membership of the United Nations. They swell the ranks of our illustrious United Nations family, confirming its universality.

I should like to pursue my statement by evoking the metaphor of the river. Each wave lapping the banks has its own character, but they all call from the same river. They express multiplicity in consistency. The same can be said of our annual sessions. This session is a new wave in the mighty river of the United Nations, a new cycle in the global rhythm of the world. Today, many of us feel hope tinged with scepticism.

Two years ago, in September 2000, we held the Millennium Summit in this very Hall. It was certainly the point of departure of a new global movement towards more peace, prosperity, justice and humanism. At the very moment when we imagined ourselves to have taken a great step forward towards the building of a better world for all, we were stunned on 11 September 2001 by the ghastly terrorist attacks perpetrated here on American soil. Those attacks of violence, which we all condemned, eclipsed our dreams and reminded us of the beast lurking within each of us.

Gabon was one of the very first nations to commit itself to implementing the provisions of Security Council resolution 1373 (2001) by taking legal action to prevent and combat terrorism. Although significant, progress made since then under the auspices of the Security Council in the campaign against international terrorism needs to be strengthened. That is why negotiations on a draft general convention on international terrorism must go on with a view to its

speedy adoption. In the same spirit, the conclusion of ongoing discussions on a convention on the suppression of acts of nuclear terrorism will supplement the international anti-terrorism legal framework.

The cloud of uncertainty looming over our collective security is darkened by the Israel-Palestinian crisis. It is regrettable to note that renewed violence in the Middle East is calling all previous efforts into question. The international community must mobilize to rekindle the flame of peace in that region, which has been beset by ceaseless violence for decades. Gabon encourages both sides to resume dialogue and negotiation with a view to implementing the relevant resolutions of the Security Council, in particular resolutions 242 (1967) and 338 (1973), which stress the need for the coexistence of the Palestinian State with the State of Israel, with respect for secure and internationally recognized borders.

Similarly, Gabon hopes that the current talks between the two Koreas will help allay tensions between the two countries.

Positive developments in the overall situation in Africa attest to the continent's gradual return to the path of peace, stability and unity. Fratricidal conflicts are increasingly giving way to the emergence of an African awareness marked by the determination to see the ideals of peace prevail and to devote ourselves to development. This wave of hope has been justified by recent developments, particularly in the Great Lakes region. We are convinced that this progress will give impetus to the peace process in that region. Accordingly, we believe that it is time to convene an international conference on the region in order to consolidate peace there.

However, the progress that has been made in resolving conflicts in Africa should not blind us to the situations in Angola, Liberia, the Central African Republic and Guinea-Bissau, which, having been destabilized by years of conflict, are now facing enormous difficulties, particularly in the humanitarian area, in restoring domestic peace and security. The international community must lend its support to the economic and social recovery efforts of those countries so as to prevent them from being caught up yet again in the spiral of violence.

The world's economic and social situation is disquieting. The commitments that we undertook at the Millennium Summit, and which were reiterated at the Monterrey International Conference on Financing for Development, have yet to bear fruit. Globalization, which we thought would permit the harmonious integration of all countries into the international community through the process of trade liberalization, has not yet attained the hoped-for results. On the contrary, we see that there has been an increase in social inequality and a widening gap between industrialized and developing countries.

Efforts by developing countries, particularly in the areas of consolidating democracy, the rule of law, good governance, the fight against poverty and the rational protection and management of the environment, are still not being matched by the developed countries, as attested to by the continued diminution of external resources for development and the drop in foreign investment. One must add to that the growth of conditionalities and other barriers that could keep those countries in a state of permanent economic and social stagnation.

Among the elements contributing to that state of affairs is the heavy burden of debt. In fact, several developing countries, including Gabon, devote almost half of their budgetary resources to repayment of debt, while at the same time they must find solutions to the many problems that inhibit their development. We have the firm conviction that, by reducing the indebtedness of our countries to a sustainable level, we can allocate more resources to priorities such as universal education and health, housing, poverty reduction and environmental management. We hope that the promise made by the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund to extend the current debt relief mechanisms to other developing countries — including those with intermediate incomes, such as Gabon — will quickly become reality.

In order to respond to those concerns, Africa has established the New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD). NEPAD is a true development programme based on good governance, respect for human rights and the strengthening of democracy, peace and security, which are preconditions for the economic recovery of the continent. That programme calls on the international community for effective support. Members can easily understand why the African countries place much hope in the debate that the General Assembly will devote to NEPAD

tomorrow, 16 September, in which the President of Gabon will take part.

Malaria and, above all, HIV/AIDS are major obstacles to Africa's development that could ultimately deprive the continent of much of its human potential. We are pleased that the First Ladies of Africa have understood the gravity of this problem by creating, in partnership with the Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS (UNAIDS), an organization to combat malaria and the HIV/AIDS pandemic, called the Organization of the First Ladies of Africa against HIV/AIDS. We are convinced that this new structure — headed by the First Lady of Gabon, Ms. Edith Lucie Bongo, whose self-sacrifice and dynamism are well known — will complement the efforts of African States in combating this scourge. We also expect strong action from the international community to accompany our efforts in the fight against the pandemic.

The preservation of global ecosystems is another subject of concern for the world. Only a few weeks ago, heads of State or Government met at Johannesburg, South Africa, for the World Summit on Sustainable Development. Despite the momentum it generated, the Summit did not reduce the risks that weigh on our environment. We think that, in view of the lack of progress in implementing the recommendations of environmental conferences organized over the past decade, it is becoming increasingly urgent that States implement Agenda 21 and the other relevant international instruments.

Gabon, for its part, has just created a zone of national parks that covers 10 per cent of our national territory. Those protected areas are proof of our contribution to the process of preserving global ecological balance in general and to the management and conservation of Africa's massive tropical forest in particular. That is why we welcome the launching in Johannesburg, by United States Secretary of State Colin Powell, of the initiative to preserve the flora and fauna of the countries of the Congo river basin.

Positive trends in the world can be guaranteed only in an institutional environment bearing the seal of universality. The United Nations, in our view, embodies such an environment, where there must be true multilateral cooperation, based on justice, equality, solidarity and the participation of all. It is evident that, in order to be a global centre for interaction and debate, the United Nations needs reforms. Those reforms, for which we have been calling for several years, are unavoidable if we wish to see the continued existence of the United Nations, whose membership has increased constantly since its creation in 1945. Reform of the Organization must be based on a reaffirmation of the purposes and principles of the Charter, primary among which are international peace and security.

The International Court of Justice, in a 1949 advisory opinion concerning certain expenditures of the United Nations, stated that it was natural to give top priority to international peace and security, because the other purposes could not be attained unless that fundamental condition were met. International peace and security are the preconditions for development, which in turn is a way to create the stability and well-being that are necessary to guarantee peaceful and friendly relations among nations.

The United Nations is the property of humanity. It was born out of awareness of the horrors of the Second World War, in which all peoples participated, including Africans. We wish to see Africa play a more important role in the Organization, particularly in the Security Council, by being given at least one permanent seat with the same privileges as the other members with the same status. Furthermore, Africa has been recognized by the United Nations as a top priority, and we are convinced that the creation of a Secretariat office concerned exclusively with African issues would remedy the shortcomings we have seen in the implementation of previous programmes devoted to Africa, such as the United Nations Programme for the Economic Redressing and Development of Africa and the United Nations New Agenda for the Development of Africa in the 1990s.

Our collective action for development will not be truly effective unless we use dialogue and cooperation as tools for global solidarity based on the promotion of partnerships. Today or never, we must reaffirm that we all belong to the one and only human race and define the new contours of our collective destiny. We can thus draw from our shared river, the United Nations, the resources that will enable us to build, with hope and confidence, a better world for everyone.

The Acting President: I now give the floor to the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Portugal, His Excellency Mr. Antonio Martins da Cruz.

Mr. Da Cruz (Portugal): The international agenda was forever changed by the events of 11 September 2001. The challenge created for the United Nations was, and is, the same as that for each of its Members: how best to react to those changes. The international fight against terrorism has thus become a top priority for all of us. It is not only a fight against individuals who conspire to kill innocent people; it is also, in itself, a fight for respect for human life and human dignity, for the values of liberty, tolerance and democracy and for the peaceful solution of conflicts.

The United Nations immediately pledged its Members to the struggle through a swift reaction by the General Assembly and by the Security Council, which stated that the terrorist attacks of 11 September were a threat to international peace and security and which adopted a resolution, sending out a remarkable signal of strength, quickly followed by other international organizations, such as the European Union and the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE).

As members are aware, Portugal currently holds the chairmanship of the OSCE. We have made the fight against terrorism a priority on the OSCE's agenda. As Chairman-in-Office, I have been working towards a European charter on preventing and fighting terrorism, to be adopted at the ministerial meeting to be held in Portugal next December.

Mr. Maher El Sayed (Egypt), Vice-President, took the Chair.

But the United Nations is in a unique position to coordinate and invigorate the international response to terrorism. We are called upon to demonstrate that a world in which humanity can live free from fear is not only a common aspiration but also an achievable goal. We trust that the Security Council and the General Assembly will live up to their responsibilities in that regard. Failure to do so would seriously compromise the credibility of the Organization.

(*spoke in Portuguese; English text furnished by the delegation*)

At the same time that the world faces the new challenge of terrorism, old challenges persist. The Middle East demands a new peace dynamic. The evolution of the Iraqi issue must entail absolute respect for Security Council resolutions and the unconditional return of United Nations inspectors. Indeed, we consider the problem concerning Iraq often to be wrongfully presented: Iraq is a threat to international security, and thus pressure must be exerted on Iraq, not on the United Nations or on one particular country. It is Iraq that is failing to comply with United Nations resolutions. Our goal is to put an end to the threat represented by weapons of mass destruction. The United Nations and its Members cannot and must not continue to tolerate the continuous violation of Security Council resolutions. Thus, the international community must know how to act effectively and must be particularly demanding on this issue.

The Security Council should promptly make a statement on Iraq's lack of compliance with Council resolutions and on its obligations. It is now up to Iraq to seize this opportunity and to cooperate with the United Nations. But, should Iraq persist in not complying fully with the Organization within a time frame to be determined, the international community should not exclude any alternative or option.

On the other hand, two success stories from the past year deserve a special reference. First, in Angola, peace was achieved and seems irreversible. Portugal will continue to work with the Angola's Government and political forces towards the full implementation of the Lusaka Protocol. The United Nations must contribute to that process. Humanitarian assistance is vital for the consolidation of the peace process. Those steps, along with free elections and a modern economic framework, will surely strengthen peace and democracy in that country.

Secondly, East Timor's proclamation of independence on 20 May represents a success for the people of East Timor, for the United Nations and for those who fought for it. The General Assembly will soon proclaim East Timor a new Member. An independent East Timor within the United Nations deeply touches the Portuguese people, who have always believed in the rights of East Timor's people and in the justice of their cause. East Timor started from scratch. It is now up to the international community to maintain its support, lest it squander the opportunity to meet the challenges of that new country.

I turn now to a number of other noteworthy matters. As a founding party to the Statute of the International Criminal Court, Portugal believes that the election of a first team of judges will be a crucial step towards the Court's effective functioning and

credibility. That institution and its regular functioning must become a fixture of the international scene.

The New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD) underlines the preoccupation of African countries with the values of democracy and human rights, as well as sustainable economic development and the continent's integration into economic globalization. Bearing such concerns in mind, Portugal will organize the next conference between the European Union and Africa, to be held in April 2003. Africa is a priority for us. Therefore, we support initiatives to energize the development policies and economies of that forgotten continent.

Finally, we welcome Switzerland's accession to membership of the United Nations. The presence of the Swiss Confederation will certainly benefit United Nations action.

(*spoke in English*)

The way in which the world embraces the new challenges it faces will be the best indication that the events of one year ago resulted in a triumph for the international community. A safer world is founded on secure countries representing all their people and living in peace. That is how terrorism will eventually be defeated, and out of that the new international order should gradually emerge.

Security can no longer be conceived in exclusively military terms or solely in terms of territorial defence. Several factors must be taken into consideration: the widespread development of weapons of mass destruction; the proliferation of other threats, such as environmental degradation, diseases such as HIV/AIDS, famine and migration, which transcend State borders; and factors affecting the ability of many States to face the challenge of globalization. Thus, no nation, however powerful, is self-sufficient; not even the greatest of countries can do everything on its own. Multilateral cooperation is the key to the future. One of the basic goals of the United Nations should be to implement such cooperation in a practical and consistent manner.

The Acting President (*spoke in Arabic*): I now give the floor to His Excellency Mr. Władzimierz Cimoszewicz, Minister for Foreign Affairs of Poland.

Mr. Cimoszewicz (Poland): I convey my congratulations to Mr. Jan Kavan on his election to the presidency of this body. I should also like to express once again to Secretary-General Kofi Annan my highest appreciation and to assure him of my support.

It is with satisfaction that Poland welcomes in our midst the newest Member of the United Nations, Switzerland, and looks forward to welcoming soon the Democratic Republic of Timor-Leste.

Wisława Szymborska, the Polish poet and Nobel Prize winner, wrote the following words dedicated to the victims of 11 September:

> "They plunged down from heights ablaze ...
> For them, I can do but two things — depict their flight and leave the last sentence unfinished ..."

I believe that every one of us travelling to this brave city shared similar thoughts. All of us must have asked ourselves what is being expected of us, where we are today and what obligations we are to fulfil to ensure that such horror never happens again. No doubt, 11 September was a wake-up call for all of us. It may have not changed the world, but it certainly has fundamentally changed the way we perceive it. History has yet again given us the responsibility to face the challenge and to leave a better and safer world for future generations. But then, after all, is that not what we are really here for?

Many of my colleague representatives touched upon that issue in recent days. The messages delivered here just four days ago by Secretary-General Kofi Annan and President George W. Bush are especially significant. In that regard, we also share the opinions expressed by a number of other speakers, in particular by the Prime Minister of Denmark, Mr. Anders Fogh Rasmussen, speaking in his capacity as the President of the European Union.

Today the United Nations stands at a crossroads, facing a choice that needs to be made. Either we will find internal strength to stand up to the challenge and prove that the United Nations is more than a mere discussion forum or we will lose credibility forever. Once again, as was the case at the inception of the Organization over half a century ago, we must take the issue of security seriously, especially as terrorism has given it a new dimension.

As a founding Member of the United Nations, Poland will continue to support all efforts aimed at preserving the Organization's unique position. We fully agree with what the Secretary-General said, that we can only succeed if we make full use of multilateral

institutions. We share the position of President Bush that the United Nations must be effective and successful and that its resolutions must be enforced. We are convinced that the Security Council must find enough strength in the nearest future to set the course for a decision-making process in the United Nations aimed at concrete action. This time, we are left with a very small margin. This is a test that international community has to pass. Failure would undermine both the integrity of the United Nations and the security of the whole world.

I think the most appropriate motto for my further reflections on the future of the United Nations is contained in the Secretary-General's millennium report. He wrote that

> "If the international community were to create a new United Nations tomorrow, its make-up would surely be different from the one we have." (*A/54/2000, para. 352*)

It would be highly unfortunate if the millennium report, and especially its conclusions relating to the role of the United Nations and the reform of the Organization, were to fade into oblivion. Only the United Nations, given its exceptional legitimacy stemming from the universal character of both its membership and its mandate can — and, indeed, ought to — rise to the challenges posed to the international community. But for that to happen its prerogatives, rules and instruments would have to be geared to the needs of today and the threats of tomorrow.

We should consider the elaboration of a document that would be neither a draft revision of the Charter nor a supplement to it. What I would like to suggest is that we make an attempt to acknowledge the new reality and try a new road. I am by no means being original or precedent-setting in calling for this. The Atlantic Charter and the New Atlantic Charter, the 1975 Helsinki Final Act and the 1990 Charter of Paris for a New Europe have all been there before. In other words, adapting an organization's mandate to make it relevant to new needs without actually revising its founding act has already been tested.

There is a widespread sense that some provisions of the United Nations Charter having actually become a dead letter. That applies to both the substance of those provisions and to the procedural solutions they offer. Some of the Charter's provisions and organs have completed the tasks assigned to them and are now redundant. But the Organization does need new mechanisms to run peacekeeping operations. It is impossible to comprehend why we still keep in place clauses on "enemy States" while the United Nations has no regulations to properly address the problems related to its humanitarian interventions. There is a general acceptance of the need for clear lines to be drawn to mark new areas of responsibility for a number of important United Nations organs.

The values, purposes and principles of the United Nations, enshrined in the Preamble and in Articles 1 and 2 of the Charter, have not lost their relevance. They have stood the test of time. A document that could be considered as a new act for the United Nations at the dawn of the twenty-first century could give fresh impetus to the principles, organs and mechanisms of the United Nations and make them more responsive to the needs and challenges that today dominate the life of the international community. Let me point out four groups of problems that should be tackled, starting with new threats to security.

The Charter makes reference to threats traditionally raised by States. The Charter's provisions concerning the Security Council and its composition and instruments, as well as the other Chapters dealing with security, are now insufficient. That fact is borne out by the numerous developments of recent years, including the attack of 11 September and its consequences.

Then there is acute poverty, which is evident in many parts of the world; chronic underdevelopment; pandemic disease; lack of education and medical care; and deepening differences in living conditions and developmental standards. All of these are unacceptable politically and morally.

Human rights, the rule of law, democracy, good governance and civil society make up the third group of problems that I have been thinking about.

The fourth group is made up of themes related to sustainable development. The focus on the protection of the human habitat, which is indispensable to the survival of the human race, and on the common heritage of mankind.

Moreover, existing United Nations principles must be expanded, or new ones developed, in order for the Organization to pursue its actions along the following three dimensions, namely, in manifestations

of multilateralism in the work of the United Nations while reconciling broad representation and collectivism with effectiveness; in the subsidiarity of the Organization's work to better utilize the means and resources available to Member States, specifically with regard to United Nations regional arrangements; and, finally, in getting non-governmental entities, including private capital, involved in United Nations work in a way that will not detract from the democratic nature of the Organization nor erode its governmental character and efficiency while increasing its resources and effectiveness.

I dare say that no country, group of countries or regional agencies meeting the Organization's criteria would be capable of taking up the totality of problems such an undertaking would have to address. Subject to appropriate consultations involving the membership of the Organization and the Secretary-General, we might wish to establish a "group of sages" made up of outstanding personalities. The group would draft an appropriate document that would then be reviewed and approved by Member States. That document should be politically binding in nature, which would make it complementary to the legal grounding contained in the Charter and provide a platform for the United Nations actions over the coming decades.

We should think about the future and work on its foundations, but without losing sight of present-day achievements. The enactment of the Statute of the International Criminal Court is one such achievement. It turns a new page in both international relations and international law. It is Poland's desire for the treaty establishing the Court to become one of the most universal documents of its kind. We trust that the existing divergences between respective stands and views can be resolved through dialogue and compromise, according to international law. We have to act so as not to disappoint the hopes and expectations that the international community has placed in the Court.

A year ago, the whole world joined together in an unprecedented demonstration of solidarity. Today we are more aware of the source and the character of the threat. We are also more capable of dealing with it. Poland has joined the ongoing anti-terrorist operation. Our soldiers are now deployed in Afghanistan, alongside their colleagues from other countries, and are doing their utmost to strengthen security there and to help raise the country from the rubble and ruin inflicted upon it by two decades of war and internal strife.

For us that is natural, but we cannot avoid asking ourselves the question of whether we are any closer today to fulfilling the ideals towards which we set sail half a century ago. We now have another chance to revitalize solidarity and work together for values that are priceless both to us and to generations to come. Let us all create an axis of good that will bring back the proper meaning to the term we are so proud of, the United Nations.

The Acting President (*spoke in Arabic*): I now call on His Excellency Mr. Luvsangiin Erdenechuluun, Minister for Foreign Affairs of Mongolia.

Mr. Erdenechuluun (Mongolia): Mongolia welcomes wholeheartedly the newest member of the United Nations family, Switzerland, a country that has a long-standing association with the United Nations as its second largest headquarters. We also look forward to welcoming East Timor, the youngest member of the international community.

A little over two years ago, at the historic Millennium Summit held here in New York, our leaders reaffirmed their commitment to the purposes and principles of the United Nations Charter and pledged their unequivocal support for a more efficient and reinvigorated United Nations so that this unique world body can effectively address the formidable challenges of the new century and, indeed, of the new millennium.

Some important steps have been taken to reform and adapt the United Nations to the evolving international realities, with a view to ensuring its efficient functioning in the era of globalization. However, the reform process, particularly that of the Security Council, tends to slow down and hence, there is an apparent need to take proper measures to speed it up. Mongolia stands for a just and equitable enlargement of the Security Council and for democratization of international relations by enhancing the openness and transparency of the work of the Security Council and by increasing the role of the General Assembly, as envisaged in the Charter of the United Nations.

The United Nations has been instrumental in intensifying the efforts of the world community aimed at developing a collective response to global terror, at helping reach national reconciliation and build a peace

process in post-Taliban Afghanistan, at assisting in the emergence of an independent East Timor and at helping to bring about the entry into force of the Statute of the International Criminal Court. It has also been indispensable in paving the way towards reaching consensus at Doha, Monterrey, Rome and Johannesburg, which were important steps along the road towards meeting the millennium development goals.

Yet, much still remains to be done to sustain the progress achieved, to honour commitments made and to redress setbacks to international peace and security in today's volatile environment. The tragic events of 11 September have shown that there is a need for a fundamental change in our perception of security. More weapons and allocating more resources to the military do not necessarily translate into increased security. Security can no longer be confined to the boundaries of a single State, or even a group of States. This indivisibility of global security makes multilateralism the order of the day. To paraphrase the Secretary-General, let us all recognize that today global security is our national security. Let us also recognize that ensuring the security of the human person must be at the heart of our concerns. The concept of human security is increasingly making a case for itself.

The outgoing year has witnessed serious threats to international peace and security. The remnants of those threats continue to pose a menace to the international community.

In Afghanistan, the United Nations is helping the Afghan Government in its efforts towards rehabilitation, reconstruction and development. Those objectives can only be achieved if the Government of President Karzai exercises effective control over the entire country.

The prevailing explosive situation in the Middle East is of special concern. It calls for sustained efforts aimed at reaching a just and comprehensive solution to the problem. Mongolia supports the efforts of the Quartet and of the countries of the region to find ways to peacefully settle that long-festering conflict. The convening of an international conference to consider effective measures for such a solution will undoubtedly be a step in the right direction.

My Government shares the view that the Security Council should make every effort to impress upon Iraq the need to comply with Council resolutions and, as a first step, accept weapons inspections unconditionally. The world community cannot afford to sit idle in the face of open defiance of mandatory resolutions of the Security Council.

The world has not only been threatened by the escalation of tension in various regions, it has also been threatened by increasing human insecurity resulting from the failure of the international community to deliver on the crucial commitments it made during the 1990s. In his address to the General Assembly last year, my Prime Minister appealed to the international community to make the first decade of this new century a decade of implementation and cooperation towards a safer and better world, as we cannot afford to fail during yet another decade if we are serious about ensuring human security. We cannot afford to fail to implement the far-reaching, yet achievable, targets set by our leaders at the Millennium Summit. That is all the more so as our failure or inaction could be used as justification for deadly acts by those who threaten peace, stability and social progress.

That appeal is even more relevant today. The 2002 *Human Development Report* indicates that if current trends continue, a significant portion of the world's States are unlikely to achieve the millennium development goals, including the overarching target of halving extreme poverty by 2015. If global progress continues at such a snail's pace, it will take more than 130 years to rid the world of hunger.

A legitimate question arises, namely what has to be done by the international community to redress that situation? The short answer could be to display genuine solidarity and for all to share responsibility in honouring the commitments made without delay. But the people of our countries, in whose service this world body was conceived, have waited through dozens of conferences and their five-year reviews while the implementation of agreed targets continues to be stalled at levels far from those desired. Under these circumstances it is our considered view that it is incumbent upon the international community to closely look into the existing imbalance in global governance, especially in the economic and social areas.

Mongolia believes that with its impartiality and universal legitimacy, as well as its Charter-based prevalence over any other international agreement, the United Nations is uniquely placed to provide for global

governance in economic and social areas while allowing equal participation by the South in the decision-making process. We therefore believe that it is high time to engage in an earnest dialogue about an entirely new framework of development cooperation that is more responsive to the emerging imperatives of global human security.

As we see it, the new development partnership between the North and the South should be based on justice, not on charity; on equitable sharing of global market opportunities, not on protectionism or aid; and on mutual cooperation, not on unilateral conditionality or confrontation. The Economic and Social Council has an important role to play in initiating and promoting that dialogue, in line with the objectives set forth in Article 55 of the Charter.

Furthermore, transnational organized crime, illicit drugs, money-laundering, the illegal arms trade, the spread of HIV/AIDS, global pollution, climate change and other negative phenomena pose a persistent threat to rich and poor nations alike. They call for a new cooperation framework to be developed to defend the new frontiers of global human security and to fill critical gaps in the existing system of global economic governance. At a time of increasing globalization, the formidable challenges facing the human family require an adequate response. It would be a fallacy to replace fundamental reform with a piecemeal approach or marginal remedies. If there is strong political will on the part of the international community to collectively stand up to these challenges, then why not engage in a common quest for an adequate architecture of global governance for human security?

Mongolia expresses its firm support for the creation of the New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD). NEPAD is a comprehensive blueprint and a broad vision for Africa's future economic and social development. It is Africa-owned, and based on the lessons of the past decade. We hope that that important initiative will receive the generous support of the international community with a view to attaining the ambitious goal of an African renaissance.

My own country, Mongolia, which has the inherent development handicap of being landlocked and is very susceptible to natural disasters, is not immune from many of the threats to human security to which I have referred. In addition to the persistence of poverty and unemployment and the disruption of basic health and social services, human security in Mongolia is affected by the increasing recurrence of natural disasters and the spread of environmental degradation, including desertification, water and air pollution. Efforts to improve human security are further hampered by extremely low population density, a weak infrastructure and a small, non-diversified economy that is very vulnerable to external shocks.

Capitalizing on its valuable assets of well-educated human resources and accumulated experience of reform in both the political and economic areas, Mongolia is endeavouring to ensure the human security of its people through both national action and international cooperation.

Nationally, my Government launched, in late 2000, the Good Governance for Human Security programme, aimed at improving the capacity to formulate and implement policies to ensure human security. Thus far, we have succeeded in securing a national commitment to its implementation on the part of all the branches of the State; institutionalizing the programme's implementation mechanism; and laying the groundwork for the greater involvement and participation of civil society, the private sector and academia.

At the international level, Mongolia, for its part, has been endeavouring to contribute, where it can, to the common efforts of the world community, while drawing attention to issues of particular concern to it.

As a landlocked developing country, Mongolia attaches particular importance to enhancing international cooperation to ease the inherent development challenges faced by that group of countries. In this regard, my delegation looks forward to the forthcoming International Ministerial Meeting on transit transport cooperation, to be held in 2003 in Kazakhstan.

In recognition of the crucial role of education in ensuring sustainable human development and human security, my delegation is pleased to note that at its last session the General Assembly proclaimed — as the result of an initiative of Mongolia — the 10-year period starting 1 January 2003 as the United Nations Literacy Decade. We look forward to the unanimous adoption of the Decade's draft plan of action at this session of the General Assembly.

Ten years ago Mongolia declared itself a nuclear-weapon-free zone. Since then, it has adopted national legislation defining and regulating that status. At present, consultations are under way with our immediate neighbours and other States concerned on ways to institutionalize our status internationally. I would like to take this opportunity to thank the five nuclear-weapon States for their cooperation, and United Nations bodies for their invaluable support in translating the initiative into reality.

In recent years, Mongolia has been actively engaged in establishing and strengthening institutions and processes of democratic governance, protecting human rights and promoting democratic consolidation. Its efforts have been similar to those of many other States that are promoting democratic values and developing democratic institutions. We believe that the Fifth International Conference of New or Restored Democracies, to be held from 18 to 20 June 2003 in Mongolia, could provide an important opportunity for the international community to exchange information and experience and search for practical ways of promoting and strengthening democracy nationally and internationally. I would like to take this opportunity to express my Government's heartfelt gratitude to this body for graciously accepting our offer and setting in motion the preparations for the Conference. The main theme of the Conference is democracy, good governance and civil society.

Mongolia believes that the International Criminal Court, established on 1 July, could be instrumental in ending impunity and upholding justice, deterring future crimes and further strengthening international criminal law. As one of its founding members, Mongolia also believes that the widest possible accession to the Court will broaden the geographic scope of the Court's jurisdiction and thus end impunity for acts of genocide, war crimes and crimes against humanity. The Court's jurisdiction should eventually cover the crime of aggression.

In conclusion, may I reiterate my Government's resolve to work with other Member States towards making our world Organization better equipped to meet the global challenges lying ahead.

The Acting President: I give the floor to His Excellency Mr. Vilayat Guliyev, Minister for Foreign Affairs of Azerbaijan.

Mr. Guliyev (Azerbaijan): I should like first of all to congratulate Mr. Jan Kavan on his assumption of the presidency of the General Assembly at its fifty-seventh session, and to express gratitude to Mr. Han Seung-soo for his efforts as President during the fifty-sixth session.

I also have pleasure in congratulating Switzerland on becoming a Member State.

The United Nations, which is called upon to play a leading role in ensuring international peace and security, is currently undertaking a serious examination of its ability to unify the efforts of Member States and to organize efficient international cooperation in confronting threats and risks that have a global dimension.

The tragic events that occurred in New York one year ago made all of us look at the world in a new way and recognize the global interdependence of the challenges of the new era. We must recognize that the world itself has enabled the monster of terrorism to develop by ignoring problems, turning a blind eye to violations of the norms of international law, tolerating aggression and failing to respond to threats caused by the illegal actions of some States, by separatism and by the proliferation of weapons. It is necessary for us to learn lessons from the mistakes made and to launch a broad offensive against terrorism on the basis of common approaches.

Respect for a universal approach that does not permit inconsistency, selectiveness or double standards is an indispensable condition for global solidarity in confronting terrorism. The legal basis of such an approach must be set out in a comprehensive convention to combat terrorism. No political, social, ideological, religious or other reason can justify any of the acts, methods or practices of terrorism. Effectively counteracting terrorism and achieving its total eradication demand the use of the broadest, most complex approach, taking into consideration the various aspects of the problem and its root causes.

It is obvious that terrorist groups recruit new members and flourish most easily in an environment characterized by economic and social degradation, armed conflict, poverty, illiteracy and self-isolation. The necessary resources should be mobilized to open up new programmes of assistance to the developing and less developed countries, and to expand existing programmes. The implementation of United Nations

decisions on assistance for the sustainable development and relaunching of economic growth in those countries plays a major role. We need to take special note of the need to render urgent international assistance to Afghanistan.

Another important aspect in the eradication of terrorism is the avoidance of inter-civilizational tensions and the creation of a spirit of mutual respect among religions and cultures. We support the trend towards continuing and deepening the dialogue among civilizations, and we stress its multifaceted nature. We believe that the implementation of programmes in the fields of education, information and cultural dialogue among civilizations will facilitate the creation of relations of mutual understanding and trust, which are so greatly needed in order to resolve the common problems faced by both the West and the East.

In this context, I would like to stress in particular the importance of the international conference initiated by Azerbaijan on "The Role of Religion and Belief in a Democratic Society: Searching for Ways to Combat Terrorism and Extremism", to be held in cooperation with the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) on 10 and 11 October 2002 in Baku.

In the combat against international terrorism, priority should be given to addressing militant nationalism and aggressive separatism. Very often terrorist groups of separatists and nationalists of various kinds maintain close ties among each other and are directly sponsored by States. The fight against terrorism represents an extremely complex problem in the so-called uncontrolled territories that have emerged as a result of armed separatism and foreign aggression.

For 10 years now such an uncontrolled zone has existed in that part of the territory of Azerbaijan occupied by Armenia. Elevating the ideology of aggressive nationalism, terrorism and territorial claims to neighbours to the rank of State policy, the Republic of Armenia, through direct interference in the internal affairs of Azerbaijan, formed an armed separatist terrorist group within the Nagorno-Karabakh region of the Republic of Azerbaijan. This was followed by open, armed aggression by Armenia against Azerbaijan.

Armenia, which perpetrated ethnic cleansing against the Azerbaijani people in their own territory in 1987 and 1988, in 1992 and 1993 occupied the entire Nagorno-Karabakh region, expelling 60,000 native Azerbaijani people. It has also occupied the territories of another seven regions of the Republic of Azerbaijan, thus bringing the total number of Azerbaijani refugees to 1 million. Armenia now intends to consolidate the results of its aggression and ethnic cleansing and to tear away the Nagorno-Karabakh region from Azerbaijan.

Armenia has tried to camouflage its annexationist policy by appealing to the principle of the right of peoples to self-determination. However, according to international law, this principle can be realized only in a peaceful way and in accordance with the principle of territorial integrity. The right to self-determination does not imply the unilateral right of secession and should not lead to the disintegration of a sovereign and independent State.

Furthermore, the Armenians residing in the Nagorno-Karabakh region of the Republic of Azerbaijan can in no way be regarded as independent subjects with the right to self-determination.

The assertion of the Armenian side that the Nagorno-Karabakh region has never belonged to Azerbaijan is equally groundless, as is its reference to international law. Aside from the fact that appealing to history in the context of the settlement of inter-State conflicts is wrong, extremely dangerous and calls into question the universality of the norms of the international law, it must be noted that these statements by Armenia are refuted by numerous historical official documents.

Armenia, which often refers to the League of Nations to justify its territorial claims, must remember that, in its official documents, the League of Nations expressed doubt as to the existence of a stable government capable of representing Armenia and, what is most important, certified Armenia's lack of clearly defined borders.

The decisions of Armenia's Parliament on the reunification of the Nagorno-Karabakh region with Armenia and on the non-recognition of any international document which mentions this region as an integral part of Azerbaijan are illegal. Likewise, the decisions taken by the illegal separatist regime in the Nagorno-Karabakh region, the so-called referendums and elections it held in a situation of war and the forcible expulsion of the entire Azerbaijani population cannot have any international legal validity.

Furthermore, Armenia itself has violated the right of the Azerbaijani people to self-determination. In accordance with the universally recognized international legal doctrine *uti possidetis juris*, former Union republics are recognized as new independent States within borders previously existing within the federations. These were the exact borders within which the United Nations recognized Azerbaijan in March 1992, when it accepted our country as a fully fledged Member of this universal Organization.

In 1993 the Security Council adopted resolutions 822 (1993), 853 (1993), 874 (1993) and 884 (1993) on the Armenian-Azerbaijani conflict. These resolutions were adopted following each new stage of Armenian aggression against Azerbaijan. The Council unambiguously supported the sovereignty and territorial integrity of the Republic of Azerbaijan, confirmed its recognition of Nagorno-Karabakh as an integral part of the Republic of Azerbaijan, and resolutely demanded the immediate, full and unconditional withdrawal of the Armenian forces from the occupied territories of Azerbaijan and the creation of conditions for the return of refugees and displaced persons. However, these demands by the Security Council have so far not been implemented.

Those resolutions also contained a request to the Secretary-General, the OSCE Chairman-in-Office and the Chairman of the Minsk Group, to submit, in implementing the mandate for the settlement of Armenian-Azerbaijani conflict, reports on the situation in the region to the Security Council. The last decision stressed the request to provide information on the process of the implementation of all four resolutions. Regrettably, this request still remains on paper only. Such a state of affairs cannot be beneficial for us; it leads to the "discharging" of the settlement process and, eventually, to a freezing of the situation at a dangerous point of fait accompli of the occupation. The non-implementation of Security Council resolutions undermines its authority as well as people's belief in justice and in the possibility of a peaceful political settlement.

As is well known, in the annual resolution of the General Assembly on cooperation with the OSCE, the United Nations expresses its support for the efforts of the regional organization and its Minsk Group, which mediates the settlement of the conflict in and around the Nagorno-Karabakh region of the Republic of Azerbaijan.

How can we evaluate these decade-long efforts, which have been under way since the establishment of the Minsk Group at the Conference on Security and Cooperation (CSCE) Ministerial Council held in Helsinki in March 1992? While at the early stages of the mediation the Minsk Group was putting forward proposals on the elimination of the consequences of the conflict, its present activities can be characterized as following a "wait-and-see" policy against the background of the negotiations, until the victimized party accepts the conditions of the aggressor.

Such a position on the part of the mediators can be regarded only as passive support for Armenia's fait-accompli policy, which is unacceptable to us.

Azerbaijan, which remains committed to a peaceful settlement of the conflict and to interaction with the OSCE and its Minsk Group, sees an urgent need for a new and resolute intervention by the Security Council, which so far has not used its potential effectively to contribute to the settlement of the Armenian-Azerbaijani conflict.

The current situation is explosive. Yes, the ceasefire has been observed for eight years and mediation activity is being maintained, but a real peaceful settlement of the conflict has not occurred. Azerbaijan will never agree to the legalization of territorial seizures. Azerbaijan will never accept the loss of a single inch of its territory and preserves its right to undertake all the necessary measures stipulated by the United Nations Charter to protect its sovereignty and territorial integrity.

We call upon the Security Council to review the existing situation, to make Armenia immediately withdraw its armed forces from the occupied territories of Azerbaijan and to engage in negotiations on defining the status of the Nagorno-Karabakh region within Azerbaijan on the basis of the norms and principles of international law. We call upon the Republic of Armenia to heed the voice of reason and abandon its pernicious policy of territorial claims against Azerbaijan. The continuation of the occupation of Azerbaijani lands and confrontation with Azerbaijan will yield the Armenian people nothing but misfortune and suffering.

The conflict not only substantially undermines security in the South Caucasus region, but also constitutes a major obstacle to establishing bilateral and regional cooperation. This cooperation would have

provided benefits to all States in the region and played a crucial role in strengthening their positions and prestige in the international arena.

Making use of its natural resources and favourable geographic location, Azerbaijan contributes immensely to the development of the South Caucasus region and in fact plays the role of engine in its integration into the world system. According to data released last year by the Statistical Office of the European Communities, 52 per cent of the gross product of the countries of the South Caucasus was produced in Azerbaijan. A significant event, reaching far beyond the South Caucasus borders, will take place in three days: the ground-breaking ceremony of the Baku-Tbilisi-Ceyhan pipeline, the construction of which will give rise to a vast investment flow into the economies of the countries.

Armenia, by its actions against Azerbaijan, has isolated itself from participation in this kind of economic project. Yes, at every level Armenia declares its willingness to cooperate with Azerbaijan, but in Armenia's understanding, Azerbaijan must turn a blind eye to the occupation of its territories and establish economic relations with Armenia. I think members will agree that hardly anyone could accept such a suggestion, which in fact would represent appeasement of the aggressor.

Seeking ways out of the present situation and to unblock the process of conflict resolution, Azerbaijan, demonstrating a constructive approach, has proposed to Armenia that it withdraw its occupation forces from the four occupied districts and that it subsequently restore the main-line railway interlinking Azerbaijan, Armenia and other countries of the region. Conceived as a gesture of goodwill, this unique package of measures for the partial elimination of the consequences of the conflict and for the revitalization of cooperation would significantly improve the negotiating environment and public opinion in both countries. This proposal of Azerbaijan, promising benefits for both parties to the conflict and other countries of the region, enjoyed the widest support of the OSCE and its Minsk Group, the European Union and the Council of Europe. However, when it came to taking practical measures, Armenia, diligently demonstrating its commitment to peace and cooperation, rejected this step towards confidence.

The situation of "no peace, no war" in the Armenian-Azerbaijani conflict is a time bomb and a cause of despair for the people, first and foremost refugees and internally displaced persons, who have been violently deprived of their homes, left to bear the most heavy burden of the consequences of the aggression and are now losing patience and hope for the restoration of their legal rights. As a result of Armenia's aggressive actions, Azerbaijan currently gives shelter to more than 1 million refugees and internally displaced persons. In years past, great work has been carried out to solve the refugees' problems, with the assistance of international humanitarian organizations, the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) above all.

At present, we feel that the urgent necessities for targeted assistance are to provide medical institutions with the necessary medical preparations and equipment, to implement agricultural programmes, to create jobs and to develop small-scale entrepreneurship. We call upon UNHCR, other international institutions and donor States to respond to our problems and to mobilize resources for facilitating their solution on the required scale.

Let me briefly touch upon the issue of United Nations reform aimed at increasing the effectiveness and practical results of the Organization's activities. We have to determine a number of possible reforms, among which the expansion of the Security Council deserves particular mention. I would like to express the hope that the broadest possible consensus on every aspect of this issue will be reached. Greater balance within the Council could have been provided with the inclusion in its composition of influential developing countries along with the developed ones. An increase in representation within one of the United Nations leading bodies — within rational limits — would have reflected the realities of the time and the consideration of broader interests in the solution of crucial issues related to the maintenance of international peace and security. With regard to the reform, we would wish more democracy, action and compatibility with the challenges of change.

I would like to believe that the reforms will enable the United Nations to confirm its role as a universal Organization capable of maintaining international peace and security, preventing and resolving regional conflicts, and confronting global threats and risks under the new conditions of globalization.

The Acting President (*spoke in Arabic*): I now call on the Chairman of the delegation of Trinidad and Tobago, Mr. Philip Sealy.

Mr. Sealy (Trinidad and Tobago): Please allow me to preface my indication by indicating to this Assembly the regret of my Head of Government and of my Foreign Minister, who could not join us on this occasion due to pressing domestic electoral commitments.

I would wish, on behalf of the Government and people of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago, to extend to Mr. Kavan our most sincere congratulations on his election to the presidency of the General Assembly at its fifty-seventh session. We are convinced that, under his enlightened guidance, we will address with determination and courage the issues that confront the international community.

We would also wish to express at this time our deep appreciation to his predecessor, Mr. Han Seung-soo, President of the Assembly at its fifty-sixth session, for the courageous leadership which he displayed in bringing that session to a successful conclusion under difficult and trying circumstances.

To the Secretary-General, Mr. Kofi Annan, we wish to place on record our appreciation for his relentless commitment to the cause of peace, security and development and for his tireless efforts in achieving the goals of this world body.

The delegation of Trinidad and Tobago extends a warm welcome to Switzerland on its becoming the 190th State Member of the United Nations and looks forward in the not-too-distant future to the admission of Timor-Leste into our United Nations family.

The maintenance of international peace and security, together with the promotion of economic progress and the achievement of social justice for peoples all over the globe, are the pillars on which this Organization was founded more than half a century ago. These goals remain as valid today, and even more so, as when our founding fathers created this Organization.

As Governments, therefore, and as Member States of the United Nations, it is incumbent upon us, the international community as a whole, to reaffirm constantly, by word and deed, our faith in and commitment to the fundamental purposes and principles of the United Nations, particularly in the area of international peace and security. In this field, the Security Council, charged as it is with primary responsibility under the Charter for the maintenance of international peace and security, must be allowed to fully play its fundamental role, as it did in confronting the challenge posed to the international community by the terrorist acts committed in this very city on 11 September 2001.

Trinidad and Tobago remains committed to working with the Counter-Terrorism Committee established by Security Council resolution 1373 (2001) in order to do our part to eradicate the scourge of terrorism from our world.

On 31 August 1962, some 40 years ago, Trinidad and Tobago became an independent State and immediately thereafter joined this universal body. We in Trinidad and Tobago recognize and appreciate the role that the United Nations has played in promoting fundamental human rights and freedoms, the international rule of law, the peaceful settlement of disputes, the right to self-determination and the sovereign equality of States. Without proper observance by all States, large and small, of these basic principles, the world would most certainly have been a more challenging place for us all.

It is in that context that Trinidad and Tobago views with increasing concern the continued absence of a just and lasting peace in the Middle East. It is clear that peace will continue to elude that region unless all parties concerned demonstrate unequivocally the will to collaborate with a view to achieving the vision set out in Security Council resolution 1397 (2002).

The maintenance of international peace and security is a sine qua non for the achievement of our economic and social development goals. It is against this background that Trinidad and Tobago, as a small State and as a developing country, supports all efforts made through the international conferences and special sessions held within the framework of the United Nations to address the international social agenda in pursuit of integral human development worldwide. Some of those include the special session on HIV/AIDS, the International Conference on Financing for Development, the Second World Assembly on Ageing, the special session on children and the just concluded World Summit on Sustainable Development, all of which have not only recognized the concerns of the more vulnerable groups within our societies, but have

also identified various policy alternatives through which those concerns can be addressed.

There can, in fact, be no meaningful development if significant segments of our populations are allowed to remain in a state of increasing vulnerability. As a result, Trinidad and Tobago participated fully in the work of the Second World Assembly on Ageing, the special session on children and the special session on HIV/AIDS.

It is our hope that the adoption of the Political Declaration and the Madrid International Plan of Action on Ageing, as well as the Declaration and Plan of Action emerging from this year's special session on children, will serve as the basis for the development of policies at the national level to deal with the problems faced by these two vulnerable groups in our societies. For its part, the Government of Trinidad and Tobago has recently completed a draft national policy on ageing that will address the principal concerns of our ageing population.

The HIV/AIDS pandemic continues to hamper the economic and social development of our Caribbean region, affecting as it does the most economically active and productive segments of our societies. My Government has sought to incorporate this issue as a matter of priority into its national strategic planning process. It is virtually impossible, however, for any one country unilaterally to deal effectively with this public health issue. For that reason, Trinidad and Tobago is committed to participating fully in all relevant regional and international initiatives.

In that regard, member States of the Caribbean Community (CARICOM) were among the first to translate the global commitments undertaken at the special session on HIV/AIDS into regional targets when, in 2001, our Governments adopted the Nassau Declaration on Health, which identified priorities for action and partnership in addressing this global health issue. However, assistance is urgently needed to boost these national and regional initiatives. We consider timely the launching of the Global Fund to Fight HIV/AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria. We hope that through this Fund, Governments will be further empowered in their efforts to implement measures aimed at the eventual eradication of these diseases.

As a country which falls within the category of small island developing States, Trinidad and Tobago feels obliged to make reference to the tendency in the international community to underestimate the phenomenon of vulnerability, both as a condition of size and stage of development. Small island developing economies are by definition vulnerable, and in a global village, where negative occurrences in one sphere can have a ripple effect in others, the implications for us all are as real as they are apparent. The lack of inherent capacity, technology and technical know-how limits the adaptive capacity of small island developing States to cope with the challenges that they face, including global environmental problems such as climate change, biodiversity and land degradation.

As we engage in efforts at the international level to achieve environmentally sound economic development, Trinidad and Tobago remains cautious in the light of the dismal record regarding the implementation of commitments made at the Rio Summit, 10 years ago. That Summit concluded with the signing of two conventions, one on climate change and the other on biodiversity, together with the adoption of Agenda 21.

It continues to concern us that emissions of greenhouse gases have increased worldwide and that climate change is occurring at a faster rate than previously estimated, especially since small island developing States are disproportionately vulnerable to the impact of climate change, while being responsible for a minuscule proportion of such emissions. Trinidad and Tobago therefore urges that decisive action be taken to ensure that the Kyoto Protocol comes into force as early as possible, as that is the only existing international instrument that addresses these problems. We therefore welcome the political commitment given by the leaders of some key industrialized countries to ratify this Protocol in the near future.

It would seem, however, that progress under Agenda 21 has been limited primarily by lack of funding and capacity, which has resulted in the widening of the gap between the attainment of sustainable development and the alleviation of poverty. Trinidad and Tobago is therefore pleased that the recently concluded World Summit on Sustainable Development, held in Johannesburg, South Africa, agreed to specific targets in areas such as water and sanitation, health, biodiversity loss, restoration of depleted fish stocks and chemicals.

The fact that the Johannesburg Summit achieved a greater synthesis and integration of the three pillars

of sustainable development, namely, the social, economic and environmental, is also a welcome development. The enormous challenges that these issues collectively pose provide a profound insight into the magnitude of the task faced by developing countries in their quest for sustainable development. The real test of whether Johannesburg was a success will, however, come in the months and years ahead as we seek to implement the commitments made by Member States.

We must build on the momentum of the World Summit on Sustainable Development and ensure that our future course of action guarantees the outcomes envisaged in the Plan of Implementation and the Political Declaration emanating from that Summit. It is in this respect that Trinidad and Tobago would therefore expect that a priority of this Assembly would be a decision to convene an international conference in 2004 to review the implementation of the Barbados Plan of Action for the Sustainable Development of Small Island Developing States, and more so in view of the growing recognition by the international community of the special and vulnerable situation of these countries.

Additionally, the Assembly may wish to note that some of these smaller economies continue to be faced by circumstances such as onerous debt-servicing schedules, lack of access to new finance and obstacles in penetrating non-traditional markets, which negate all their efforts aimed at economic advancement.

It is for this reason that Trinidad and Tobago looks forward to the early implementation of the enhanced Heavily Indebted Poor Countries Debt Initiative and other United Nations initiatives aimed at alleviating the economic burdens faced by many low- and middle-income countries. These countries are being asked to service debts and at the same time to fulfil their commitments to the Millennium development agenda. In this regard, we welcome the recent appointment by the Secretary-General of a High Representative for the Least Developed Countries, Landlocked Developing Countries and Small Island Developing States. Trinidad and Tobago looks forward to working with the High Representative to ensure the effective discharge of his mandate, particularly as it relates to small island developing States.

Another noble attempt conceptualized within the United Nations framework was the International Conference on Financing for Development, held in Monterrey earlier this year. Trinidad and Tobago is heartened by the outcome of that Conference that defined the necessary actions for addressing some of the more pressing problems faced by developing countries in the areas of mobilizing domestic and international resources for development, international trade, financial and technical cooperation for development and external debt. My delegation therefore urges this Assembly to endorse the Monterrey Consensus as adopted by that Conference.

At the regional level, Trinidad and Tobago is engaged in joint efforts with its Caribbean Community (CARICOM) partners to assume responsibility for the management of our developing economies. At a Special CARICOM Summit held last month, CARICOM leaders mandated that a regional stabilization fund should be created within the framework of a long-term economic transformation programme. The purpose of the fund will be to provide regional economies with the necessary financial resources to respond to current and long-term economic difficulties. This regional financial cooperation programme is intended to augment budgetary resources available to member States of the Community from both domestic sources and multilateral institutions.

Trinidad and Tobago remains committed to the international rule of law and to justice for all. Our role in the reintroduction into the international agenda of the idea of the creation of a permanent International Criminal Court in 1989 is well known. And, since that time, Trinidad and Tobago has not ceased to promote support for that Court, both regionally and internationally. It continues to be the hope of my Government that at the Review Conference of 2009, the crimes of drug-trafficking and terrorism will also be included within the jurisdiction of the Court.

It is noteworthy that many States regard the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court as the single most important international instrument since the adoption of the United Nations Charter. The successful conclusion of the first meeting of the Assembly of States Parties to the Statute last week was a positive step towards the operational phase of the Court, which now stands as a permanent warning to would-be perpetrators of the crimes within its jurisdiction that impunity will no longer be tolerated by the international community and that justice will be

assured to their victims. In the election of judges to that Court, Trinidad and Tobago would, as a small State, consider it an honour to have one of its nationals elected in order to continue its contribution to the cause of international criminal justice.

But justice for all victims of the most heinous crimes of genocide, war crimes and crimes against humanity will only be assured when this most recently created International Criminal Tribunal gains the widest possible acceptance. We therefore encourage those States that have not yet done so to ratify or accede to the Statute.

In order to ensure that the Court will truly achieve the goals for which it was established, the States Parties must stand together in their efforts to preserve the integrity of the Statute to which they have committed themselves and must, with one accord, resist any attempts to undermine the effectiveness and independence of the Court.

In conclusion, the issues which I have raised in this forum today point to the need for the globalization of genuine commitment to the resolution of the problems that currently confront our international community. What is required therefore is a greater sense of shared commitment to the fundamental purposes and principles of the United Nations in the face of new and ominous threats to global peace and security; to the vision of a world free from poverty, hunger and disease; and to an international organization fully charged by its Member States with the political will to tackle frontally all the challenges that pose threats to the very survival of mankind. Trinidad and Tobago, forty years after joining the United Nations, renews before the Assembly its firm commitment to abide fully by the purposes and principles of the United Nations Charter and to make its contribution to the economic and social progress of peoples the world over.

The meeting rose at 1.30 p.m.